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Non-Christian religions of
the world

NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD

BY

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THE
RISE AND DECLINE
OF
ISLAM

BY

SIR WILLIAM MUIR, K.C.S.I., LL.D., D.C.L.

Argument of the Tract.

THE progress of Islam was slow until Mahomet cast aside the precepts of toleration, and adopted an aggressive, militant policy. Then it became rapid. The motives which animated the armies of Islam were mixed—material and spiritual. Without the truths contained in the system, success would have been impossible, but neither without the sword would the religion have been planted in Arabia, nor beyond. The alternatives offered to conquered peoples were Islam, the Sword, or Tribute. The drawbacks and attractions of the system are examined. The former were not such as to deter men of the world from embracing the faith. The sexual indulgences sanctioned by it are such as to make Islam “the Easy way.”

The spread of Islam was stayed whenever military success was checked. The Faith was meant for Arabia and not for the world, hence it is constitutionally incapable of change or development. The degradation of woman hinders the growth of freedom and civilization under it.

Christianity is contrasted in the means used for its propagation, the methods it employed in grappling with and overcoming the evils that it found existing in the world, in the relations it established between the sexes, in its teaching with regard to the respective duties of the civil and spiritual powers, and, above all, in its redeeming character, and then the conclusion come to that Christianity is Divine in its origin.

THE RISE AND DECLINE OF ISLAM.



AMONGST the religions of the earth, Islam must take the precedence in the rapidity and force with which it spread. Within a very short time from its planting in Arabia, the new faith had subdued great and populous provinces. In half a dozen years, counting from the death of the founder, the religion prevailed throughout Arabia, Syria, Persia, and Egypt; and before the close of the century, it ruled supreme over the greater part of the vast populations from Gibraltar to the Oxus, from the Black Sea to the river Indus.

Islam pre-
eminent in
its rapid
spread.

In comparison with this grand outburst, the first efforts of Christianity were, to the outward eye, faint and feeble; and its extension so gradual, that what the Mahometan religion achieved in ten or twenty years, it took the faith of Jesus long centuries to accomplish.

Propagation
far quicker
than of
Christianity

The object of these few pages is, *first*, to inquire briefly into the causes which led to the marvellous rapidity of the first movement of Islam; *secondly*, to consider the reasons which eventually stayed its advance; and, *lastly*, to ascertain why Mahometan

Object of the
Tract.

countries have kept so far in the rear of other lands in respect of intellectual and social progress. In short, the question is, how it was that, Pallas-like, **the Faith sprang, ready armed, from the ground, conquering and to conquer**; and why, the weapons dropping from its grasp, Islam began to lose its pristine vigour, and finally relapsed into inactivity.

I.

THE RAPID SPREAD OF ISLAM.

Two periods
in the
mission of
Mahomet.

THE personal ministry of Mahomet divides itself into two distinct periods. First, his life at Mecca, as a preacher and a prophet. Second, his life at Medina, as a prophet and a king.

I. Ministry
at Mecca;
A. D. 609-622.

It is only in the first of these periods that Islam at all runs parallel with Christianity. The great body of his fellow-citizens rejected the ministry of Mahomet, and bitterly opposed his claims. His efforts at Mecca were, therefore, confined to teaching and preaching, and to the publishing of the earlier "Suras" or chapters of his "Revelation." After some thirteen years spent thus, his converts, to the number of about a hundred and fifty men and women, were forced by the persecution of the Coreish (the ruling tribe at Mecca, from which Mahomet was descended), to quit their native city and emigrate to Medina.¹ A hundred more

¹ See *Life of Mahomet*, p. 138. Smith and Elder.

had previously fled from Mecca for the same cause, and found refuge at the court of the Negus, or king of Abyssinia; and there were already a small company of followers amongst the citizens of Medina. At the utmost, therefore, the number of disciples gained over by the simple resort to teaching and preaching, did not, during the first twelve years of Mahomet's ministry, exceed a few hundreds. It is true that the soil at Mecca was stubborn and (unlike that of Judæa) wholly unprepared. The cause also, at times, became the object of sustained and violent opposition. Even so much of success was consequently, under the peculiar circumstances, remarkable. But it was by no means singular. The progress fell far short of that made by Christianity during the corresponding period of its existence,¹ and indeed by many reformers who have been the preachers of a new faith. It gave no promise whatever of the marvellous spectacle that was about to follow.

Success at Mecca limited.

Having escaped from Mecca, and found a new and congenial home in Medina, Mahomet was not long in changing his front. At Mecca, surrounded by enemies, he taught toleration. He was simply the preacher commissioned to deliver a message, and bidden to leave the responsibility with his Master and his hearers. He might argue with the

II. Change of policy at Medina, A.D. 622-632

¹ *Life of Mahomet*, p. 172, where the results are compared.

Arabia
converted
from
Medina at
the point of
the sword.

disputants, but it must be "in a way most mild and gracious;" for "in religion" (such was his teaching before he reached Medîna) "there should be neither violence nor constraint."¹ At Medîna the precepts of toleration were quickly cast aside, and his whole policy reversed. No sooner did Mahomet begin to be recognized and obeyed as the chief of Medîna, than he proceeded to attack the Jewish tribes settled in the neighbourhood, because they refused to acknowledge his claims and believe in him as a prophet foretold in their Scriptures; two of these tribes were exiled, and the third exterminated in cold blood. In the second year after the Hegira, or flight from Mecca (the period from which the Mahometan era dates), he began to plunder the caravans of the Coreish, which passed near to Medîna on their mercantile journeys between Arabia and Syria. So popular did the cause of the now militant and marauding prophet speedily become amongst the citizens of Medîna and the tribes around, that after many battles fought with varying success, he was able, in the eighth year of the Hegira, to re-enter his native city at the head of ten thousand armed followers. Thenceforward, success was assured. None dared to oppose his pretensions. And before his death, in the eleventh year of the Hegira, all Arabia, from Bâb-el-Mandeb and Omân to the confines of the Syrian desert,

A. D. 622.

A. D. 630.

A. D. 632.

¹ *Life of Mahomet*, p. 341; Sura II. 257; xxix. 46.

was forced to submit to the supreme authority of the now kingly prophet, and to recognize the faith and obligations of Islam.¹

This *Islam*, so called from its demanding the entire "surrender" of the believer to the will and service of God, is based on the recognition of Mahomet as a prophet foretold in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures,—the last and greatest of the prophets. On him descended the Corân, from time to time, an immediate revelation from the Almighty. Idolatry and Polytheism are with iconoclastic zeal denounced as sins of the deepest dye; while the unity of the Deity is proclaimed as the grand and cardinal doctrine of the Faith. Divine providence pervades the minutest concerns of life; and predestination is taught in its most naked form. Yet prayer is enjoined as both meritorious and effective; and at five stated times every day must it be specially performed. The duties generally of the moral law are enforced, though an evil laxity is given in the matter of polygamy and divorce. Tithes are demanded as alms for the poor. A fast during the month of Ramzan must be kept throughout the whole of every day; and the yearly pilgrimage to Mecca,—an ancient institution, the rites of which were now

Religion of
Mahomet
described.

¹ The only exceptions were the Jews of Kheibar and the Christians of Najrân, who were permitted to continue in the profession of their faith. They were, however, forced by Omar to quit the peninsula, which thenceforward remained exclusively Mahometan.

"Islam" is a synonym for the Mussulman faith. Its original meaning is "surrender" of oneself to God.

divested of their heathenish accompaniments,—maintained. The existence of angels and devils is taught; and heaven and hell are depicted in material colours,—the one of sensuous pleasure, the other of bodily torment. Finally, the resurrection, judgment, and retribution of good and evil, are set forth in great detail. Such was the creed—*there is no god but the LORD, and MAHOMET is his prophet*—to which Arabia now became obedient.

Arabia
apostatizes:
but is
speedily
re-conquered
and
reclaimed,
A. D. 634.

But immediately on the death of Mahomet, the entire Peninsula relapsed into apostasy. Medina and Mecca remained faithful; but everywhere else the land seethed with rebellion. Some tribes joined the “false prophets,” of whom four had arisen in different parts of Arabia; some relapsed into their ancient heathenism; while others proposed a compromise,—they would observe the stated times of prayer, but would be excused the tithe. Everywhere was rampant anarchy. The apostate tribes attacked Medina, but were repulsed by the brave old Caliph Abu Bekr, who refused to abate one jot or tittle, as the successor of Mahomet, of the obligations of Islam. Eleven columns were sent forth, under as many leaders, trained in the warlike school of Mahomet. These fought their way step by step successfully; and thus, mainly through the wisdom and firmness of Abu Bekr, and the valour and genius of Khâlid, “the Sword of God,” the

Arab tribes, one by one, were overcome, and forced back into their allegiance and the profession of Islam. The re-conquest of Arabia, and re-imposition of Mahometanism as the national faith, which it took a whole year to accomplish, is thus described by an Arabian author, who wrote at the close of the second century of the Mahometan era :

After his decease, there remained not one of the followers of the Prophet that did not apostatize, saving only a small company of his "Companions" and kinsfolk, who hoped thus to secure the government to themselves. Hereupon, Abu Bekr displayed marvellous skill, energy, and address, so that the power passed into his hands. . . . And thus he persevered until the apostate tribes were all brought back to their allegiance, some by kindly treatment, persuasion, and craft; some through terror and fear of the sword; and others by the prospect of power and wealth, as well as by the lusts and pleasures of this life. And so it came to pass that all the Bedouin tribes were in the end converted outwardly, but not from inward conviction.¹

The temper of the tribes, thus reclaimed by force of arms, was at the first strained and sullen. But the scene soon changed. Suddenly the whole peninsula was shaken, and the people, seized with a burning zeal, issued forth to plant the new faith in other lands. It happened on this wise.

The Arabs thus reclaimed were, at the first, sullen.

The columns sent from Medîna to reduce the rebellious tribes to the north-west on the Gulf of Ayla, and to the north-east on the Persian Gulf, came at once into collision with the Christian Bedouins of Syria on the one hand, and with those

Roused by war cry, they issue from the peninsula. A.D. 634, *et seq.*

¹ *Apology of Al Kindy, the Christian*, p. 18. Smith & Elder, 1882. This remarkable Apologist will be noticed further below.

The oppos-
ing forces.

Arab
enthusiasm.

of Mesopotamia on the other. These, again, were immediately supported by the neighbouring forces of the Roman and Persian empires, whose vassals respectively they were. And so, before many months, Abu Bekr found his generals opposed by great and imposing armies on either side. He was, in fact, waging mortal combat, at one and the same moment, with the Kaiser and the Chosroes, the Byzantine emperor and the great king of Persia. The risk was imminent, and an appeal went forth for help to meet the danger. The battle-cry resounded from one end of Arabia to the other, and electrified the land. Levy after levy, *en masse*, started up at the call from every quarter of the Peninsula; and the Bedouin tribes, as bees from their hive, streamed forth in swarms, animated by the prospect of conquest, plunder, and captive damsels; or, if slain in battle, by the still more coveted prize of the "Martyr" in the material paradise of Mahomet. With a military ardour and new-born zeal in which carnal and spiritual aspirations were strangely blended, the Arabs rushed forth to the field, like the war-horse of Job, "that smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains and the shouting." Sullen constraint was in a moment transformed into an absolute devotion and fiery resolve to spread the faith. The Arab warrior became the Missionary of Islam.

It was now the care of Omar, the second Caliph or Ruler of the new-born empire, to establish a system whereby the spirit militant, called into existence with such force and fervour, might be rendered permanent. The entire Arabian people was subsidized. The surplus revenues, which, in rapidly increasing volume, began to flow from the conquered lands into the Moslem treasuries, were to the last farthing distributed among the soldiers of Arabian descent. The whole nation was enrolled, and the name of every warrior entered upon the roster of Islam. Forbidden to settle anywhere, and relieved from all other work, the Arab hordes became, in fact, a standing army threatening the world. Great bodies of armed men were kept thus ever mobilized, separate and in readiness for new enterprise.

Arabs, a military body, subsidized and mobilized by Omar.

The change which came over the policy of the Founder of the faith at Medîna, and paved the way for this marvellous system of world-wide rapine and conversion to Islam, is thus described by a thoughtful and sagacious writer:—

Mission of Islam described by Fairbairn.

. . . . Medina was fatal to the higher capabilities of Islam. Mahomet became then a king ; his religion was incorporated in a State that had to struggle for its life in the fashion familiar to the rough-handed sons of the desert. The Prophet was turned into the legislator and commander ; his revelations were now laws, and now military orders and manifestoes. The mission of Islam became one that only the sword could accomplish, robbery of the infidel became meritorious, and conquest the supreme duty it owed to the world. . . .

The religion which lived an unprospering and precarious life, so long as it depended on the prophetic word alone, became an aggressive and victorious power, so soon as it was embodied in a State.¹

And by
von Kremer.

Another learned and impartial authority tells us:

The Mussulman power under the first four Caliphs was nothing but a grand religio-political association of Arab tribes for universal plunder and conquest under the holy banner of Islam, and the watch-word "There is no God but THE LORD, and MAHOMET is His Apostle." On pretext of spreading the only true religion, the Arabs swallowed up fair provinces lying all around; and, driving a profitable business, enriched themselves simultaneously in a worldly sense.²

Religious
merit of
"fighting in
the way of
the Lord

The motives which nerved the armies of Islam were a strange combination of the lower instincts of nature with the higher aspirations of the spirit. To engage in the Holy War was the rarest and most blessed of all religious virtues, and conferred on the combatant a special merit; and side by side with it lay the bright prospect of spoil and female slaves, conquest and glory. "Mount thy horse," said Osâma ibn Zeid to Abu Bekr as he accompanied the Syrian army a little way on its march out of Medîna. "Nay," replied the Caliph, "I will not ride; but I will walk, and soil my feet a little space in the ways of the Lord. Verily, every footstep in the ways of the Lord is equal in merit to manifold good works, and wipeth away a

¹ Principal Fairbairn: "The Primitive Polity of Islam," *Contemporary Review*, December, 1882, pp. 866, 867.

² Herr von Kremer, *Culturgeschichte des Orients*, unter den Chalifen, vol. 1., p. 383.

multitude of sins.”¹ And of the “Martyrs,” those who fell in these crusading campaigns, Mahomet thus described the blessed state:—

Think not, in any wise, of those killed in the ways of the Lord, as if they were dead. Yea, they are alive, and are nourished with their Lord, exulting in that which God hath given them of His favour, and rejoicing in behalf of those who have not yet joined them, but are following after. No terror afflicteth them, neither are they grieved.—*Sura III.*

The material fruits of their victories raised the Arabs at once from being the needy inhabitants of a stony sterile soil, where, with difficulty, they eked out a hardy subsistence, to be the masters of rich and luxuriant lands flowing with milk and honey. After one of his great victories on the plains of Chaldæa, Khâlid called together his troops, flushed with conquest, and lost in wonder at the exuberance around them, and thus addressed them: “Ye see the riches of the land. Its paths drop fatness and plenty, so that the fruits of the earth are scattered abroad, even as stones are in Arabia. If but as a provision for this present life, it were worth our while to fight for these fair fields, and banish care and penury for ever from us.” Such were the aspirations dear to the heart of every Arab warrior. Again, after the battle of Jalôla, a few years later, the treasure and spoil of the Persian monarch, captured by the victors, was valued at thirty

Material
fruits of
Moslem
crusade.

¹ *Annals of the Early Caliphate*, p. 9. Smith & Elder, 1883.

million of dirhems (about a million sterling). The royal fifth (the Crown share of the booty) was sent as usual to Medîna, under charge of Ziâd, who, in the presence of the Caliph Omar, harangued the citizens in a glowing description of what had been won in Persia, fertile lands, rich cities, and endless spoil, beside captive maids and princesses.

Rich booty
taken in the
capital of
Persia,
A.D. 637.

In relating the capture of Medâin (the ancient Ctesiphon), tradition revels in the untold wealth which fell into the hands of Sad, the conqueror, and his followers. Besides millions of treasure, there was endless store of gold and silver vessels, rich vestments, and rare and precious things. The Arabs gazed bewildered at the tiara, brocaded vestments, jewelled armour, and splendid surroundings of the throne. They tell of a camel of silver, life-size, with a rider of gold, and of a golden horse with emeralds for teeth, the neck set with rubies, the trappings of gold. And we may read in Gibbon of the marvellous banqueting carpet, representing a garden, the ground of wrought gold, the walks of silver, the meadows of emeralds, rivulets of pearls, and flowers and fruits of diamonds, rubies, and rare gems. The precious metals lost their conventional value, gold was parted with for its weight in silver; and so on.¹

It is the virtue of Islam that it recognizes a

¹ Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, chapter LI.; and *Annals of the Early Caliphate*, p. 184.

special Providence, seeing the hand of God, as in everything, so pre-eminently also in victory. When Sad, therefore, had established himself in the palace of the Chosroes, he was not forgetful to render thanks in a Service of praise. One of the princely mansions was turned for the moment into a temple, and there, followed by his troops, he ascribed the victory to the Lord of Hosts. The lesson accompanying the prayers, was taken from a Sura (or chapter of the Corân) which speaks of Pharaoh and his riders being overwhelmed in the Red Sea, and contains this passage, held to be peculiarly appropriate to the occasion:—

Success in battle ascribed to divine aid

How many Gardens and Fountains did they leave behind,
And Fields of corn, and fair Dwelling-places,
And pleasant things which they enjoyed!

Even thus have WE made another people to inherit the same.¹

Such as fell in the conflict were called Martyrs; a halo of glory surrounded them, and special joys awaited them even on the battle-field. And so it came to pass that the warriors of Islam had an unearthly longing for the crown of martyrdom. The Caliph Omar was inconsolable at the loss of his brother, Zeid, who fell in the fatal "Garden of Death," at the battle of Yemâma: "Thou art returned home," he said to his son, Abdallah, "safe and sound, and Zeid is dead. Wherefore wast not thou slain before him? I

"Martyrdom" in the field coveted by Moslem crusaders

Ibid; and Sura XLIV. v. 25. *We*, that is, the Lord.

The Moslem
crown of
martyrdom.

wish not to see thy face." "Father," answered Abdallah, "he asked for the crown of martyrdom,¹ and the Lord granted it. I strove after the same, but it was not given unto me." It was the proud boast of the Saracens in their summons to the craven Greeks and Persians, that "they loved death more than their foes loved life." Familiar with the pictures drawn in the Corân of the beautiful "Houries" of Paradise,² the Saracens believed that immediate fruition on the field of battle was the martyr's special prize. We are told of a Moslem soldier, fourscore years of age, who, seeing a comrade fall by his side, cried out, "O Paradise! how close art thou beneath the arrow's point and the falchion's flash! O Hâshim! even now I see heaven opened, and black-eyed maidens all bridally attired, clasping thee in their fond embrace." And shouting thus, the aged warrior, fired again with the ardour of youth, rushed upon the enemy, and met the envied fate. For those who survived there was the less ethereal but closer prospect of Persian, Greek, or

¹ *Annals of the Early Caliphate*, p. 46.

² See, e.g., *Sura lxxviii.*; "Verily for the Pious, there is a blissful abode: gardens and vineyards; and damsels with swelling bosoms, of a fitting age; and a full cup. Lovely large-eyed girls, like pearls hidden in their shells, a reward for that which the faithful shall have wrought. Verily We have created them of a rare creation, virgins, young and fascinating. . . . Modest damsels averting their eyes, whom no man shall have known before, nor any Jinn," etc.

The reader will not fail to be struck by the materialistic character of Mahomet's Paradise.

Coptic women, both maids and matrons, who, on "being taken captive by their right hand," were forthwith, according to the Corân, without stint of number, at the conqueror's will and pleasure. These, immediately they were made prisoners, might (according to the example of Mahomet himself at Kheibar) be carried off without further ceremony to the victor's tent; and in this respect the Saracens certainly were nothing loth to execute upon the heathen the judgment written in their law. So strangely was religious fanaticism fed and fostered in the Moslem camp by incentives irresistible to the Arab;—fight and foray, the spoil of war and captive charms.

The courage of the troops was stimulated by the divine promises of victory, which were read (and on like occasions still are read) at the head of each column drawn up for battle. Thus, on the field of Câdesîya, which decided the fate of Persia, the Sura *Jehâd*, with the stirring tale of the thousand angels that fought on the Prophet's side at Bedr was recited, and such texts as these:—

Stir up the faithful unto battle. If there be twenty stedfast among you, they shall put two hundred to flight of the unbelievers, and a hundred shall put to flight a thousand. Victory is from the Lord. He is mighty and wise. I the Lord will cast terror into the hearts of the infidels. Strike off their heads and their fingers' ends. Beware lest ye turn your back

Martial passages from Coras recited on field of battle.

A.D. 635.

in battle. Verily, he that turneth his back shall araw down upon himself the wrath of God. His abode shall be hell fire; an evil journey thither. And we are told that on the recital of these verses "the heart of the people was refreshed, and their eyes lightened, and they felt the tranquillity that ensueth thereupon." Three days they fought, and on the morning of the fourth, returning with unabated vigour to the charge, they scattered to the winds the vast host of Persia.¹

Defeat of
Byzantine
army on the
Yermuk,
A.D. 634.

Nor was it otherwise in the great battle of the Yermûk, which laid Syria at the feet of the Arabs. The virgin vigour of the Saracens was fired by a wild fanatical zeal "to fight in the ways of the Lord," obtaining thus heavenly merit and a worldly prize—the spoil of Syria and its fair maidens ravished from their homes; or should they fall by the sword, the black-eyed houries waiting for them on the field of battle. "Of warriors nerved by this strange combination of earth and heaven, of the flesh and of the spirit, of the incentives at once of faith and rapine, of fanatical devotion to the Prophet and deathless passion for the sex, ten might chase a hundred half-hearted Romans. The forty thousand Moslems were stronger far than the two hundred and forty thousand of the enemy." The combat lasted for weeks;

¹ See *Sura Jehâd*. Also *Annals of the Early Caliphate*, p. 167 et seq.

but at the last the Byzantine force was utterly routed, and thousands hurled in wild confusion over the beetling cliffs of the Yermûk, into the yawning chasm of Wacûsa.¹

Such, then, was the nature of the Moslem propaganda, such the agency by which the faith was spread, and such the motives at once material and spiritual, by which its martial Missionaries were inspired. No wonder that the effete empires of Rome and Persia recoiled and quivered at the shock, and that province after province quickly fell under the sway of Islam. It is far from my intention to imply that the truths set forth by the new faith had nothing to do with its success. On the contrary, it may well be admitted that but for those truths success might have been impossible. The grand enunciation of the Divine Unity, and the duty of an absolute submission to the same; the recognition of a special Providence reaching to the minutest details of life; the inculcation of prayer and other religious duties; the establishment of a code in which the leading principles of morality are enforced; and the acknowledgment of previous revelation in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, told not only on the idolaters of Arabia and the Fire-worshippers of Persia, but on Jews and Samaritans, and the followers of a debased and priest-ridden Christianity. All **this**

Islam
planted by
aid of
material
force.

is true; but it is still not the less true that without the sword, Islam would never have been planted even in Arabia, much less ever have spread to the countries beyond. The weapons of its warfare were "carnal," material, and earthly; and by them it conquered.

The pressure brought to bear on the inhabitants of the countries overrun by Saracen arms was of the most stringent character. They were offered the triple alternative—**ISLAM**, the **SWORD** or **TRIBUTE**. The first brought immediate relief. Acceptance of the faith not only stayed the enemy's hand, and conferred immunity from the perils of war, but associated the convert with his conquerors in the common brotherhood and in all the privileges of Islam.

Alternatives offered to the conquered nations; Islam, the Sword, or Tribute.

Reading the story of the spread of Islam, we are constantly told of this and that enemy, that "being beaten, he *believed* and embraced the faith." Take as an example of an every-day occurrence, the story of Hormuzân. A Persian prince of high rank long maintained a border warfare against the Moslems. At last he was taken prisoner, and sent in chains to Medîna. As he was conducted into the Great Mosque, Omar exclaimed, "Blessed be the Lord, that hath humbled this man and the like of him!" He bade them disrobe the prisoner, and clothe him in sackcloth. Then, whip in hand, he upbraided him for

Acceptance of Islam, immediate relief from the sword.

his oft-repeated attacks and treachery. Hormuzân made as if fain to reply ; then gasping, like one faint from thirst, he begged for water to drink. "Give it him," said the Caliph, "and let him drink in peace." "Nay," cried the wretched captive, trembling, "I fear to drink, lest some one slay me unawares." "Thy life is safe," said Omar, "until thou hast drunk the water up." The words were no sooner said than Hormuzân emptied the vessel on the ground. "I wanted not the water," he said, "but quarter, and thou hast given it me." "Liar!" cried Omar, angrily, "thy life is forfeit."—"But not," interposed the bystanders, "until he drink the water up." "Strange," said Omar, "the fellow hath deceived me; and yet I cannot spare the life of one who hath slain so many noble Moslems. I swear that thou shalt not gain by thy deceit, unless thou wilt forthwith embrace Islam." Upon that, "*believing*, he made profession of the true faith upon the spot;" and thenceforth, residing at Medîna, he received a pension of the highest grade.¹

On the other hand, for those who held to their ancestral faith, there was no escape from the second or the third alternative. If they would avoid the sword, or having wielded it were beaten, they must become tributary. Moreover, the payment of tribute is not the only condition enjoined by the Corân.

Tribute and
humiliation.

¹ See *Annals*, etc., p. 253.

Disabilities
imposed on
Jews and
Christians.

“Fight against them (the Jews and Christians) until they pay tribute with the hand, *and are humbled.*”¹ The command fell on willing ears. An ample interpretation was given to it. And so it came to pass that, though Jews and Christians were, on the payment of tribute, tolerated in the profession of their ancestral faith, they were yet subjected (and still are subjected) to severe humiliation. The nature and extent of the degradation to which they were brought down, and the strength of the inducement to purchase exemption and the equality of civil rights, by surrendering their religion, may be learned from the provisions which were embodied in the Code named *The Ordinance of Omar*, which has been more or less enforced from the earliest times. Besides the tribute and various other imposts levied from the “People of the Book,”² and the duty of receiving Moslem travellers quartered upon them, the dress of both sexes must be distinguished by broad stripes of yellow. They are forbidden to appear on horseback, and if mounted on a mule or ass, their stirrups must be of wood, and their saddles known by knobs of the same material. Their graves must not rise above the level of the soil, and the devil’s mark is placed upon the lintel of their doors. Their children must be taught by

¹ *Sura IX.* v. 30.

² So Jews and Christians as possessing the Bible are named in the Corân.

Moslem masters, and the race, however able or well qualified, proscribed from any office of high emolument or trust. Besides the churches spared at the time of conquest, no new building can be erected for the purposes of worship; nor can free entrance into their holy places at pleasure be refused to the Moslem. No cross must remain in view outside, nor any church bells be rung. They must refrain from processions in the street at Easter, and other solemnities; and from anything, in short, whether by outward symbol, word, or deed, which could be construed into rivalry, or competition with the ruling faith. Such was the so-called *Code of Omar*. Enforced with less or greater stringency, according to the intolerance and caprice of the day, by different dynasties, it was, and (however much relaxed in certain countries), it still remains, the law of Islam. One must admire the rare tenacity of the Christian faith, which, with but scanty light and hope, held its ground through weary ages of insult and depression, and still survives to see the dawning of a brighter day.¹

Such, then, was the hostile attitude of Islam militant in its early days; such the pressure brought to bear on conquered lands for its acceptance; and such the disabilities imposed upon recusant Jews and Christians. On the one hand, rapine,

Continuing inducement in times of peace.

¹ See *Annals*, etc., p. 213.

plunder, slavery, tribute, civil disability; on the other, security, peace, and honour. We need not be surprised that, under such constraint, conquered peoples succumbed before Islam. Nor were the temporal inducements to conversion confined to the period during which the Saracens were engaged in spreading Islam by force of arms. Let us come down a couple of centuries from the time of Mahomet, and take the reign of the tolerant and liberal-minded Sovereign, Al Mamûn.

Amongst the philosophers of all creeds whom that great Caliph gathered around him at Baghdad, was a noble Arab of the Nestorian faith, descended from the kingly tribe of the Beni Kinda, and hence called *Al Kindy*. A friend of this Eastern Christian, himself a member of the Royal family, invited Al Kindy to embrace Islam in an epistle enlarging on the distinguished rank which, in virtue of his descent, he would (if a true believer) occupy at court, and the other privileges, spiritual and material, social and conjugal, which he would enjoy. In reply, the Christian wrote an Apology of singular eloquence and power, throwing a flood of light on the worldly inducements which, even at that comparatively late period, abounded in a Moslem state to promote conversion to Islam. Thus Al Mâmûn himself, in a speech delivered before his council,

Evidence of
Al Kindy in
second
century of
Hegira,
A. D. 830.

characterizes certain of his courtiers accused as secret adherents of the Zoroastrian faith :— Speech of Al Mâmîn.

Though professing Islam, they are free from the same. This they do to be seen of me ; while their convictions, I am well aware, are just the opposite of that which they profess. They belong to a class which embrace Islam, not from any love of this our Faith, but thinking thereby to gain access to Our court, and share in the honour, wealth, and power of the Realm. They have no inward persuasion of that which they outwardly profess.¹

Again, speaking of the various classes brought over to Islam by sordid and unworthy motives, Al Kindy says :— Converts from sordid motives.

Moreover, there are the idolatrous races,—Magians and Jews,—low people aspiring by the profession of Islam to raise themselves to riches and power, and to form alliances with the families of the learned and honourable. There are, besides, hypocritical men of the world, who in this way obtain indulgences in the matter of marriage and concubinage which are forbidden to them by the Christian faith. Then we have the dissolute class given over wholly to the lusts of the flesh. And lastly, there are those who by this means obtain a more secure and easy livelihood.²

Before leaving this part of our subject, it may be opportune to quote a few more passages from Al Kindy, in which he contrasts the inducements that, under the military and political predominance of Islam, promoted its rapid spread, and the opposite conditions under which Christianity made progress, slow indeed comparatively, Al Kindy contrasts the Christian confessor with the Moslem "martyr."

¹ *The Apology of Al Kindy*, written at the court of Al Mâmûn A.H. 215 (A.D. 830), with an Essay on its age and authorship, p. xii. Smith & Elder, 1882.

² *Ibid.*, p. 34.

The
Christian
Confessor
and the
Moslem
Martyr.

but sure and steady. First, he compares the Christian confessor with the Moslem "Martyr:"—

I marvel much, he says, that ye call those *Martyrs* that fall in war. Thou hast read, no doubt, in history of the followers of Christ put to death in the persecutions of the kings of Persia and elsewhere. Say, now, which are the more worthy to be called martyrs,—these, or thy fellows that fall fighting for the world and the power thereof? How diverse were the barbarities and kinds of death inflicted on the Christian confessors! The more they were slain, the more rapidly spread the faith; in place of one sprang up a hundred. On a certain occasion, when a great multitude had been put to death, one at court said to the king, "The number of them increaseth, instead of as thou thinkest diminishing." "How can that be?" exclaimed the king. "But yesterday," replied the courtier, "thou didst put such and such a one to death, and lo, there were converted double that number; and the people say that a man appeared to the confessors from heaven strengthening them in their last moments." Whereupon the king himself was converted. In those days men thought not their lives dear unto them. Some were transfixed while yet alive; others had their limbs cut off one after another; some were cast to the wild beasts, and others burned in the fire. Such continued long to be the fate of the Christian confessors. No parallel is found thereto in any other religion; and all was endured with constancy and even with joy. One smiled in the midst of his great suffering. "Was it cold water," they asked, "that was brought unto thee?" "No," answered the sufferer, "it was one like a youth that stood by me and anointed my wounds; and that made me smile, for the pain forthwith departed."

Now tell me seriously, my Friend, which of the two hath the best claim to be called a *Martyr*, "slain in the ways of the Lord": he who surrendereth his life rather than renounce his faith; who, when it is said,—Fall down and worship the sun and moon, or the idols of silver and gold, work of men's hands, instead of the true God,—refuseth, choosing rather to give up life, abandon wealth, and forego even wife and family; or he that goeth forth, ravaging and laying waste, plundering and spoiling, slaying the men, carrying away their children into captivity, and ravishing their wives and maidens in his unlawful embrace, and then shall call it "Jehâd in the ways of the Lord?"

. . . And not content therewith, instead of humbling thyself before the Lord, and seeking pardon for the crime, thou sayest of such a one slain in the war that "he hath earned Paradise," and thou namest him "a Martyr in the ways of the Lord"!¹

And again, contrasting the spread of Islam, "its rattling quiver and its glittering sword," with the silent progress of Christianity, our Apologist, after dwelling on the teaching and the miracles of the Apostles, writes:—

Al Kindy's contrast of the spread of Islam with the spread of Christianity.

They published their message by means of these miracles ; and thus great and powerful kings and philosophers and learned men and judges of the earth hearkened unto them, without the lash or rod, with neither sword nor spear, nor the advantages of birth or "Helpers ;"²—with no wisdom of this world, or eloquence or power of language, or subtlety of reason ; with no worldly inducement, nor yet again with any relaxation of the moral law, but simply at the voice of truth enforced by miracles beyond the power of man to show. And so there came over to them the kings and great ones of the earth. And the philosophers abandoned their systems, with all their wisdom and learning, and betook them to a saintly life, giving up the delights of this world together with their old-established usages, and became followers of a company of poor men, fishers and publicans, who had neither name nor rank, nor any claim other than that they were obedient to the command of the Messiah—He that gave them power to do such wonderful works.³

And yet once more, comparing the Apostles with the military chiefs of Islam, Al Kindy proceeds:—

The Apostles compared with the chiefs of Islam.

After the descent of the Holy Ghost and the gift of tongues, the apostles separated each to the country to which he was called. They wrote out in every tongue the Holy Gospel, and

¹ *Apology*, p. 47, et. seq.

² Alluding to the "*Ansâr*," or martial "Helpers" of Mahomet at Medina. Throughout, the Apologist, it will be observed, is drawing a contrast with the means used for the spread of Islam.

³ *Apology*, p. 16.

the story and teaching of Christ, at the dictation of the Holy Ghost. So the nations drew near unto them, believing their testimony; and giving up the world and their false beliefs, they embraced the Christian faith as soon as ever the dawn of truth, and the light of the good tidings, broke in upon them. Distinguishing the true from the false, and error from the right direction, they embraced the Gospel and held it fast without doubt or wavering, when they saw the wonderful works and signs of the apostles, and their lives and conversation set after the holy and beautiful example of our Saviour, the traces whereof remain even unto the present day. . . . How different this from the life of thy Master (Mahomet) and his Companions, who ceased not to go forth in battle and rapine, to smite with the sword, to seize the little ones, and ravish the wives and maidens, plundering and laying waste, and carrying the people into captivity. And thus they continue unto this present day, inciting men to these evil deeds, even as it is told of Omar the Caliph. "If one amongst you," said he, "hath a heathen neighbour, and is in need, let him seize and sell him." And many such things they say and teach. Look now at the lives of Simon and Paul, who went about healing the sick and raising the dead, by the name of Christ our Lord; and mark the contrast.¹

Such are the conclusions of a native of Chaldaea.

Such are the reflections of one who lived at a Mahometan Court, and who, moreover,—flourishing as he did a thousand years ago,—was sufficiently near the early spread of Islam to be able to contrast what he saw, and heard, and read, of the causes of its success with those of the Gospel, and had the courage to confess the same.

Hindrances or inducements inherent in the faith itself.

Apart, now, from the outward and extraneous aids given to Islam by the sword and by the civil arm, I will inquire, for a moment, what natural effect the teaching of Islam itself had in attracting

¹ *Apology*, p. 57.

or repelling mankind. I do not now speak of any power contained in the truths it inculcated to convert to Islam by the rousing and quickening of spiritual impulses; for that lies beyond my present purpose,—which is, to inquire whether there is not in material causes and secular motives enough in themselves to account for success. I speak rather of the effect of the indulgences granted by Islam, on the one hand, as calculated to attract; and of the restraints imposed and sacrifices required, on the other, as calculated to repel. How far, in fact, did there exist inducements or hindrances to its adoption inherent in the religion itself?

What may be regarded as the most constant and irksome of the obligations of Islam is the duty of prayer, which must be observed at stated intervals, five times every day, with the contingent ceremony of lustration. The rite consists of certain forms and passages to be repeated with prescribed series of prostrations and genuflexions. These must be repeated at the right times,—but anywhere, in the house or by the wayside, as well as in the Mosque; and the ordinance is obligatory in whatever state of mind the worshipper may be, or however occupied. As the appointed hour comes round, the Moslem is bound to turn aside to pray,—so much so that in Central Asia we read of the police driving the backward worshipper by the lash to discharge the duty. Thus, with the

Require
ments of
Islam :
Prayer.

mass of Mussulmans, the obligation becomes a mere formal ceremony, and one sees it performed anywhere and everywhere by the whole people, like any social custom, as a matter of course. No doubt, there are exceptions; but with the multitude it does not involve the irksomeness of a spiritual service, and so it sits lightly on high and low. The Friday prayers should as a rule be attended in the Mosque; but neither need there be much devotion there; and once performed the rest of the day is free for pleasure or for business.¹ The prohibition of wine is a restriction which was severely felt in the early days of the faith; but it was not long before the universal sentiment (though eluded in some quarters) supported it. The embargo upon games of chance was certainly unpopular; and the prohibition of the receipt of interest was also an important limitation, tending as it did to shackle the freedom of mercantile speculation; but they have been partially evaded on various pretexts. The Fast throughout the month of Ramzân was a severer test; but even this lasts only during the day; and at night from sunset till dawn, all restrictions are withdrawn, not only

Prohibition of wine, games of chance, and usury.

Fast of Ramzân.

¹ I am not here comparing the value of these observances with those of other religions. I am inquiring only how far the obligations of Islam may be held to involve hardship or sacrifice such as might have retarded the progress of Islam by rendering it on its first introduction unpopular.

in respect of food, but of all otherwise lawful gratifications.¹

There is nothing, therefore, in the requirements and ordinances of Islam, excepting the Fast, that is very irksome to humanity, or which, as involving any material sacrifice, or the renunciation of the pleasures or indulgences of life, should lead a man of the world to hesitate in embracing the new faith.

Little that is unpopular in these ordinances.

On the other hand, the license allowed by the Coran between the sexes,—at least, in favour of the male sex,—is so wide, that for such as have the means and the desire to take advantage of it, there need be no limit whatever to sexual indulgence. It is true that adultery is punishable by death, and fornication with stripes. But then the Coran gives the believer permission to have four wives at a time. And he may exchange them; that is, he may divorce them at pleasure, taking others in their stead.² And, as if this were not license enough, the divine law permits the believer to consort with all female slaves whom he may be the master of,—such, namely, as have been taken in war, or have been acquired by gift or purchase. These he may receive into his harem instead of wives, or in addition to them; and without any limit of number or restraint whatever, he is at liberty to cohabit with them.

Indulgences allowed in the matter of wives and concubines.

¹ See *Sura II.*, v. 88.

² *Sura*, iv. 18. "Exchange" is the word used in the Coran.

Polygamy,
concubinage,
and divorce.
Practice at
the rise of
Islam.

A few instances taken at random will enable the reader to judge how the indulgences thus allowed by the religion were taken advantage of in the early days of Islam. In the great plague which devastated Syria seven years after the Prophet's death, Khâlid, the Sword of God, lost *forty* sons. Abdal Rahmân, one of the "Companions" of Mahomet, had issue by sixteen wives, not counting slave-girls.¹ Moghîra ibn Shoba, another "Companion," and Governor of Kûfa and Bussorah, had in his harem eighty consorts, free and servile. Coming closer to the Prophet's household, we find that Mahomet himself at one period had in his harem no fewer than nine wives, and two slave-girls. Of his grandson Hasan, we read that his vagrant passion gained for him the unenviable soubriquet of *The Divorcer*; for it was only by continually divorcing his consorts that he could harmonize his craving for fresh nuptials with the requirements of the divine law, which limited the number of his free wives to four. We are told that, as a matter of simple caprice, he exercised the power of divorce seventy (according to other traditions ninety) times. When the leading men complained to Aly of the licentious practice of his son, his only reply was, that the remedy lay in their own hands, of refusing Hasan their daughters alto-

¹ Each of his widows had 100,000 golden pieces left her. *Life of Mahomet*, p. 171.

gether.¹ Such are the material inducements,—the “works of the flesh,” which Islam makes lawful to its votaries, and which promoted thus its early spread.

Descending now to modern times, we still find that this sexual license is taken advantage of more or less in different countries and conditions of society. The following examples are simply meant as showing to what excess it is possible for the believer to carry these indulgences, *under the sanction of his religion*. Of the Malays in Penang it was written not very long ago: “Young men of thirty to thirty-five years of age may be met with who have had from fifteen to twenty wives, and children by several of them. These women have been divorced, married others, and had children by them.” Regarding Egypt, Lane tells us: “I have heard of men who have been in the habit of marrying a new wife almost every month.”² Burkhardt speaks of an Arab, forty-five years old, who had had fifty wives, “so that he must have divorced two wives and married two fresh ones on the average every year.” And not to go further

Practice in modern times.

The Malays of Penang.

Lane's testimony concerning Egypt.

¹ “These divorced wives were irrespective of his concubines or slave-girls, upon the number and variety of whom there was no limit or check whatever.”—*Annals*, p. 418.

² Lane adds, “There are many men in this country who, in the course of ten years, have married as many as twenty, thirty, or more wives; and women not far advanced in age have been wives to a dozen or more husbands successively.” Note, that all this is entirely within the religious sanction.

than the sacred city of Mecca, the late reigning Princess of Bhopâl in Central India, herself an orthodox follower of the Prophet, after making the pilgrimage of the Holy places, writes thus :—

The Princess
of Bhopâl's
account of
Mecca.

Women frequently contract as many as ten marriages, and those who have only been married twice are few in number. If a woman sees her husband growing old, or if she happen to admire anyone else, she goes to the Shereef (the spiritual and civil head of the holy city); and after having settled the matter with him, she puts away her husband, and takes to herself another, who is perhaps young, good-looking, and rich. In this way a marriage seldom lasts more than a year or two.

And of slave-girls, the same high and impartial authority, still writing of the Holy city and of her fellow Moslems, tells us :—

Some of the women (African and Georgian girls) are taken in marriage; and after that, on being sold again, they receive from their masters a divorce, and are sold in their houses,—that is to say, they are sent to the purchaser from their master's house on receipt of payment, and are not exposed for sale in the slave-market. They are only *married* when purchased for the first time. . . . When the poorer people buy (female) slaves they keep them for themselves, and change them every year as one would replace old things by new; but the women who have children are not sold.¹

Islam
sanctions a
license
between the
sexes which
Christianity
forbids.

What I desire to make clear is the fact that such things may be practised *with the sanction* of the Scripture which the Moslem holds to be

¹ *Pilgrimage to Mecca*, by Her Highness the reigning Begum of Bhopal; translated by Mrs. W. Osborne, 1870, pp. 82, 88. Slave-girls cannot be *married* until freed by their master. What Her Highness tells us of women *divorcing* their husbands, is of course entirely *ultra vires*, and shows how the laxity of conjugal relations allowed to the male sex has extended itself to the female also, and that in a city where, if anywhere, we should have expected to find the law observed.

divine, and that these same indulgences have from the first existed as inducements which helped materially to forward the spread of the faith. I am very far, indeed, from implying that excessive indulgence in polygamy is the universal state of Moslem society. Happily this is not the case. There are not only individuals, but tribes and districts, which, either from custom or preference, voluntarily restrict the license given them in the Corân; while the natural influence of the family, even in Moslem countries, has an antiseptic tendency that often itself tends greatly to neutralise the evil.¹ Nor am I seeking to institute any contrast between the morals at large of Moslem countries and the rest of the world. If Christian nations are (as with shame it must be confessed) in some strata of society immoral, it is in the teeth of their Divine law. And the restrictions of that law are calculated, and in the early days of Christianity did tend, in point of fact, to deter men, devoted to the indulgences of the flesh, from em-

The law of Christianity deter men from carnal indulgences

¹ In India, for example, there are Mahometan races among whom monogamy, as a rule, prevails by custom, and individuals exercising their right of polygamy are looked upon with disfavour. On the other hand, we meet occasionally with men who aver that rather against their will (as they will sometimes rather amusingly say) they have been forced by custom or family influence to add by polygamy to their domestic burdens. In Mahometan countries, however, when we hear of a man confining himself to *one wife*, it does not necessarily follow that he has no slaves to consort with in his harem. I may remark that slave-girls have by Mahometan laws no conjugal rights whatever; but are like playthings at the absolute discretion of their master.

bracing the faith.¹ The religion of Mahomet, on the other hand, gives direct sanction to the sexual indulgences we have been speaking of. Thus it panders to the lower instincts of humanity, and makes its spread the easier. In direct opposition to the precepts of Christianity, it “makes provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.” Hence Islam has been well called by its own votaries the *Easy Way*. Once more, to quote Al Kindy :—

Islam the
“Easy
way.”

Thou invitest me (says our Apologist to his Friend) into the “Easy way of faith and practice.” Alas, alas! for our Saviour in the Gospel telleth us, “When ye have done all that ye are commanded, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have but done that which was commanded us.” Where then is our merit! The same Lord Jesus saith, “How strait is the road which leadeth unto life, and how few they be that walk therein! How wide the gate that leadeth to destruction, and how many there be that go in thereat!” Different this, my Friend, from the comforts of thy wide and easy gate, and the facilities for enjoying, as thou wouldst have me, the pleasures offered by thy faith in wives and damsels!²

¹ The case of the Corinthian offender is much in point, as showing how the strict discipline of the Church must have availed to make Christianity unpopular with the mere worldling.

² *Apology*, p. 51. I repeat that, in the remarks I have made under this head, no comparison is sought to be drawn betwixt the morality of nominally Christian and Moslem peoples. On this subject I may be allowed to quote from what I have said elsewhere: “The Moslem advocate will urge . . . the social evil as the necessary result of inexorable monogamy. The Corân not only denounces any illicit laxity between the sexes in the severest terms, but exposes the transgressor to condign punishment. For this reason, and because the conditions of what is licit are so accommodating and wide, a certain negative virtue (it can hardly be called continence or chastity) pervades Mahometan society, in contrast with which the gross and systematic immorality in certain parts of every European community may be regarded by the Christian with shame and confusion. In

Laxity
among
nominal
Christians;

II.

WHY THE SPREAD OF ISLAM WAS STAYED.

HAVING thus traced the rapid early spread of Islam to its proper source, I proceed to the remaining topics, namely, the causes which have checked its further extension, and those likewise which have depressed the followers of this religion in the scale of civilization. I shall take the former first,—just remarking here in respect of the latter, that the depression of Islam is itself one of the causes which retard the expansion of the faith.

Islam stationary in area, and in civilization retrograde.

As the first spread of Islam was due to the sword, so when the sword was sheathed Islam ceased to spread. The apostles and missionaries of Islam were, as we have seen, the martial tribes of

The Arabs ceased, in second century, to be a crusading force.

a purely Mahometan land, however low may be the general level of moral feeling, the still lower depths of fallen humanity are unknown. The "social evil," and intemperance, prevalent in Christian lands, are the strongest weapons in the armoury of Islam. We point, and justly, to the higher morality and civilization of those who do observe the precepts of the Gospel, to the stricter unity and virtue which cement the family, and to the elevation of the sex; but in vain, while the example of our great cities, and too often of our representatives abroad, belies the argument. And yet the argument is sound. For, in proportion as Christianity exercises her legitimate influence, vice and intemperance will wane and vanish, and the higher morality pervade the whole body; whereas in Islam the deteriorating influences of polygamy, divorce, and concubinage, have been stereotyped for all time."—*The Corân: its Composition and Teaching, and the Testimony it bears to the Holy Scriptures*, p. 60.

Vanishes in proportion as Christianity exercises proper influence

Arabia; that is to say, the grand military force organized by Omar, and by him launched upon the surrounding nations. Gorged with the plunder of the world, these began, after a time, to settle on their lees, and to mingle with the ordinary population. So soon as this came to pass, they lost the fiery zeal which at the first had made them irresistible. By the second and third centuries, the Arabs had disappeared as the standing army of the Caliphate, or, in other words, as a body set apart for the dissemination of the faith. The crusading spirit, indeed, ever and anon burst forth,—and it still bursts forth, as opportunity offers,—simply for the reason that this spirit pervades the Corân, and is ingrained in the creed. But with the special agency created and maintained during the first ages for the spread of Islam, the incentive of crusade ceased as a distinctive missionary spring of action, and degenerated into the common lust of conquest which we meet with in the world at large.

With
cessation of
conquest,
Islam ceased
to spread.

The extension of Islam depending upon military success, stopped wherever that was checked. The religion advanced or retired, speaking broadly, as the armed predominance made head or retroceded. Thus the tide of Moslem victory, rushing along the coast of Africa, extinguished the seats of European civilization on the Mediterranean, overwhelmed Spain, and was rapidly advancing north, when the onward wave was stemmed at Tours;

and so with the arms, the faith also, of Islam was driven back into Spain, and bounded by the Pyrenees. So likewise, the hold which the religion seized both of Spain and Sicily came to an end with Mussulman defeat. It is true that when once long and firmly rooted, as in India and China, Islam may survive the loss of military power, and even flourish. But it is equally true, that in no single country has Islam been planted, nor has it anywhere materially spread, saving under the banner of the Crescent, or the political ascendancy of some neighbouring state. Accordingly, we find that, excepting some barbarous zones in Africa which have been raised thereby a step above the grovelling level of fetishism, the faith has in modern times made no advance worth mentioning.¹ From the Jewish and Christian religions there has

¹ Much loose assertion has been made regarding the progress of Islam in Africa; but I have found no proof of it apart from armed, political, or trading influence, dogged too often by the slave trade;—to a great extent a social rather than a religious movement, and raising the fetish tribes (haply without intemperance) into a somewhat higher stage of semi-barbarism. I have met nothing which would touch the argument in the text. The following is the testimony of Dr. Koelle, the best possible witness on the subject :

Alleged progress of Islam in Africa.

“It is true, the Mohammedan nations in the interior of Africa, namely, the Bornuese, Mandengas, Pulas, etc., invited by the weak and defenceless condition of the surrounding negro tribes, still occasionally make conquests, and after subduing a tribe of Pagans, by almost exterminating its male population, and committing the most horrible atrocities, impose upon those that remain the creed of Islam; but keeping in view the whole of the Mohammedan world, this fitful activity reminds one only of those green branches sometimes seen on trees, already, and for long, decayed at the core from age.”—*Food for Reflection*, p. 37.

(again speaking broadly) been no secession whatever to Islam since the wave of Saracen victory was stayed, excepting by the force of arms. Even in the palmy days of the Abbasside Caliphs, our Apologist could challenge his adversary to produce a single conversion otherwise than by reason of some powerful material inducement. Here is his testimony:—

Al Kindy's challenge to produce a Christian convert to Islam apart from material inducements.

Now tell me, hast thou ever seen, my Friend (the Lord be gracious unto thee!) or ever heard, of a single person of sound mind—any one of learning and experience, and acquainted with the Scriptures—renouncing Christianity otherwise than for some worldly object to be reached only through thy religion, or for some gratification withheld by the faith of Jesus? Thou wilt find none. For, excepting the tempted ones, all continue steadfast in their faith, secure under our most Gracious Sovereign, in the profession of their own religion.¹

III.

LOW POSITION OF ISLAM IN THE SCALE OF CIVILIZATION.

Social and intellectual depression.

I PASS on to consider why Mahometan nations occupy so low a position, halting as almost everywhere they do in the march of social and intellectual development.

Islam intended for the Arabs.

The reason is not far to find. Islam was meant for Arabia, not for the world;—for the Arabs of the seventh century, not for the Arabs of all time; and being such, and nothing more, its claim of

¹ *Apology*, p. 34.

divine origin renders change or development impossible. It has within itself neither the germ of natural growth, nor the lively spring of adaptation. Mahomet declared himself a prophet to the Arabs;¹ and however much in his later days he may have contemplated the reformation of other religions beyond the Peninsula, or the further spread of his own (which is doubtful), still the rites and ceremonies, the customs and the laws enjoined upon his people, were suitable (if suitable at all) for the Arabs of that day, and in many respects for them alone. Again, the code containing these injunctions, social and ceremonial, as well as doctrinal and didactic, is embodied with every particularity of detail, as part of the divine law, in the Corân; and so defying, as sacrilege, all human touch, it stands unalterable for ever. From the stiff and rigid shroud in which it is thus swathed, the religion of Mahomet cannot emerge. It has no plastic power beyond that exercised in its earliest days. Hardened now and inelastic, it can neither adapt itself, nor yet shape its votaries, nor even suffer them to shape themselves, to the varying circumstances, the wants and developments of mankind.

Wants the
faculty of
adaptation

We may judge of the local and inflexible character of the faith from one or two of its ceremonies. To perform the pilgrimage to Mecca and Mount

Local
ceremonies:
Pilgrimage.

¹ *Annals*, pp. 61, 224.

Arafât, with the slaying of victims at Mina, and the worship of the Káaba, is an ordinance obligatory (with the condition only that they have the means) on all believers, who are bound to make the journey even from the furthest ends of the earth ;—an ordinance intelligible enough in a local worship, but unmeaning and impracticable when required of a world-wide religion. The same may be said of the Fast of Ramzân. It is prescribed in the Corân to be observed by all with undeviating strictness, during the whole day, from earliest dawn till sunset, throughout the month, with specified exemptions for the sick, and penalties for every occasion on which it is broken. The command, imposed thus with an iron rule on male and female, young and old, operates with excessive inequality in different seasons, lands, and climates. However suitable to countries near the equator, where the variations of day and night are immaterial, the Fast becomes intolerable to those who are far removed either towards the north or the south ; and, still closer to the poles, where night merges into day, and day into night, impracticable. Again, with the lunar year (itself an institution divinely imposed), the month of Ramzân travels in the third of a century from month to month over the whole cycle of a year. The Fast was established at a time when Ramzân fell in winter, and the change of season was probably not foreseen

Fast of
Ramzân.

by the Prophet. But the result is one which, under some conditions of time and place, involves the greatest hardship. For, when the Fast comes round to summer, the trial in a sultry climate, like that of the burning Indian plains, of passing the whole day without a morsel of bread or a drop of water, becomes to many the occasion of intense suffering. Such is the effect of the Arabian legislator's attempt at circumstantial legislation in matters of religious ceremonial.

Nearly the same is the case with all the religious obligations of Islam, prayer, lustration, etc. But although the minuteness of detail with which these are enjoined, tends towards that jejune and formal worship which we witness everywhere in Moslem lands, still there is nothing in these observances themselves which (religion apart) should lower the social condition of Mahometan populations, and prevent their emerging from that normal state of semi-barbarism and uncivilized depression in which we find all Moslem peoples. For the cause of this we must look elsewhere; and it may be recognized, without doubt, in the relations established by the Corân between the sexes. Polygamy, divorce, servile concubinage, and the veil, are at the root of Moslem decadence.

Political and social depression owing to relations between the sexes.

In respect of married life, the condition allotted by the Corân to woman is that of an inferior dependent creature, destined only for the service

Depression of the female sex.

of her master, liable to be cast adrift without the assignment of a single reason, or the notice of a single hour. While the husband possesses the power of divorce, absolute, immediate, unquestioned, no privilege of a corresponding nature has been reserved for the wife. She hangs on, however unwilling, neglected, or superseded, the perpetual slave of her lord, if such be his will. When actually divorced, she can, indeed, claim her dower, —her *hire*, as it is called in the too plain language of the Corân ; but the knowledge that the wife can make this claim is at the best a miserable security against capricious taste ; and in the case of bondmaids even that imperfect check is wanting. The power of divorce is not the only power that may be exercised by the tyrannical husband. Authority to *confine* and to *beat* his wives is distinctly vested in his discretion.¹ “Thus restrained, secluded, degraded, the mere minister of enjoyment, liable at the caprice or passion of the moment to be turned adrift, it would be hard to say that the position of a wife was improved by the code of Mahomet.”²

Even if the privilege of divorce and marital tyranny be not exercised, the knowledge of its existence as a potential right must tend to abate the self-respect, and in like degree to weaken the influence of the sex, impairing thus the ameliorating and civilizing power which she was meant to exercise

Divorce.

¹ *Sura* IV. v. 33.

² *Life of Mahomet*, p. 348.

upon mankind. And the evil has been stereotyped by the Corân for all time.

I must quote one more passage from Principal Fairbairn on the lowering influence of Moslem domestic life :

Principal Fairbairn on home life under Islam.

The god of Mohammed . . . "spares the sins the Arab loves. A religion that does not purify the home cannot regenerate the race ; one that depraves the home is certain to deprave humanity. Motherhood is to be sacred if manhood is to be honourable. Spoil the wife of sanctity, and for the man the sanctities of life have perished. And so it has been with Islam. It has reformed and lifted savage tribes ; it has deprived and barbarised civilized nations. At the root of its fairest culture, a worm has ever lived that has caused its blossoms soon to wither and die. Were Mahomet the hope of man, then his state were hopeless ; before him could only be retrogression, tyranny, and despair."¹

Still worse is the influence of servile concubinage. The following is the evidence of a shrewd and able observer in the East :

Demoralizing influence of servile concubinage.

All Zenâna life must be bad for men at all stages of their existence. . . . In youth, it must be ruin to be petted and spoiled by a company of submissive slave-girls. In manhood, it is no less an evil that when a man enters into private life, his affections should be put up to auction among foolish, fond competitors full of mutual jealousies and slanders. We are not left entirely to conjecture as to the effect of female influence on home life, when it is exerted under these unenlightened and demoralizing conditions. That is, plainly, an element *lying at the root of all the most important features that differentiate progress from stagnation.*²

Such are the institutions which gnaw at the root of Islam, and prevent the growth of freedom and

Deteriorating influence of relations established between the sexes.

¹ *The City of God*, p. 97. Hodder & Stoughton, 1883.

² *The Turks in India*, by H. G. Keene, c.s.i. Allen & Company, 1879.

civilization. "By these the unity of the household is fatally broken, and the purity and virtue of the family tie weakened; the vigour of the dominant classes is sapped; the body politic becomes weak and languid, excepting for intrigue; and the throne itself liable to fall a prey to a doubtful or contested succession,"¹—contested by the progeny of the various rivals crowded into the royal harem. From the palace downwards polygamy and servile concubinage lower the moral tone, loosen the ties of domestic life, and hopelessly depress the people.

The Veil.

Nor is the Veil—albeit under the circumstances a necessary precaution—less detrimental, though in a different way, to the interests of Moslem society. This strange custom owes its origin to the Prophet's jealous temperament. It is forbidden in the Corân for women to appear unveiled before any member of the other sex, with the exception of certain near relatives of specified propinquity.² And this law, coupled with other restrictions of the kind, has led to the imposition of the *Boorka* or *Purdah* (the dress which conceals the person, and the veil), and to the greater or less seclusion of the Harem and Zenâna.

¹ *Annals, etc.*, p. 457.

² See *Sura* xxiv. v. 32. The excepted relations are: "Husbands, fathers, husbands' fathers, sons, husbands' sons, brothers, brothers' sons, sisters' sons, the captives which their right hands possess, such men as attend them and have no need of women, or children below the age of puberty."

This ordinance, and the practices flowing from it, must survive, more or less, so long as the Corân remains the rule of faith. It may appear, at first sight, a mere negative evil,—a social custom comparatively harmless; but in truth it has a more debilitating effect upon the Moslem race perhaps than anything else, for by it *Woman is totally withdrawn from her proper place in the social circle.* She may, indeed, in the comparatively laxer license of some lands, be seen flitting along the streets or driving in her carriage; but, even so, it is like one belonging to another world,—veiled, shrouded, and cut off from intercourse with those around her. Free only in the retirement of her own secluded apartments, she is altogether shut out from her legitimate sphere in the duties and enjoyments of life. But the blight on the sex itself, from this unnatural regulation, sad as it is, must be regarded as a minor evil. The mischief extends beyond her. The tone and framework of society, as it came from the Maker's hands, are altered, damaged, and deteriorated. From the veil there flows this double injury. The bright, refining, softening influence of woman is withdrawn from the outer world; and social life, wanting the gracious influences of the female sex, becomes, as we see throughout Moslem lands, forced, hard, unnatural, and morose. Moreover, the Mahometan nations, for all purposes of common elevation, and for all

Society vitiated by the withdrawal of the female sex.

Mahometan society thus truncated, incapable of progress.

The defects
of Moham-
medan
society.

efforts of philanthropy and liberty, are (as they live in public and beyond the inner recesses of their homes) but a truncated and imperfect exhibition of humanity. They are wanting in one of its constituent parts, the better half, the humanizing and the softening element. And it would be against the nature of things to suppose that the body thus shorn and mutilated, can possess in itself the virtue and power of progress, reform, and elevation. The link connecting the family with social and public life is detached, and so neither is *en rapport*, as it should be, with the other. Reforms fail to find entrance into the family, or to penetrate the domestic soil, where alone they could take root, grow into the national mind, live and be perpetuated. Under such conditions the seeds of civilization refuse to germinate. No real growth is possible in free and useful institutions, nor any permanent and healthy force in those great movements which elsewhere tend to uplift the masses and elevate mankind. There may, it is true, be some advance, from time to time, in science and in material prosperity; but the social groundwork for the same is wanting, and the people surely relapse into the semi-barbarism forced upon them by an ordinance which is opposed to the best instincts of humanity. Sustained progress becomes impossible. Such is the outcome of an attempt to improve upon nature, and banish Woman, the

help-meet of man, from the position assigned by God to her in the world.

At the same time I am not prepared to say that in view of the laxity of the conjugal relations inherent in the institutions of Islam, some such social check as that of the Veil (apart from the power to confine and castigate) is not needed for the repression of license and the maintenance of outward decency. There is too much reason to apprehend that free social intercourse might otherwise be dangerous to morality under the code of Mahomet, and with the example before men and women of the early worthies of Islam. So long as the sentiments and habits of the Moslem world remain as they are, some remedial or preventive measure of the kind seems indispensable. But the peculiarity of the Mussulman polity, as we have seen, is such that the sexual laws and institutions which call for restrictions of the kind, as founded on the Corân are incapable of change; they must co-exist with the faith itself, and last while it lasts. So long, then, as this polity prevails, the depression of woman, as well as her exclusion from the social circle, must injure the health and vitality of the body politic, impair its purity and grace, paralyze vigour, retard progress in the direction of freedom, philanthropy, and moral elevation, and generally perpetuate the normal state of Mahometan peoples, as one of semi-barbarism.

Yet the Veil
necessary
under
existing cir-
cumstances.

Recapitulation.

To recapitulate, we have seen :—

First. That Islam was propagated mainly by the sword. With the tide of conquest the religion went forward; where conquest was arrested it made no advance beyond; and at the withdrawal of the Moslem arms the faith also commonly retired.

Second. The inducements, whether material or spiritual, to embrace Islam, have proved insufficient of themselves (speaking broadly) to spread the faith, in the absence of the sword, and without the influence of the political or secular arm.

Third. The ordinances of Islam, those especially having respect to the female sex, have induced an inherent weakness, which depresses the social system, and retards its progress.

Contrast
with
Christianity

If the reader should have followed me in the argument by which these conclusions have been reached, the contrast with the Christian faith has no doubt been suggesting itself at each successive step.

Christianity
not
propagated
by force.

Christianity, as Al Kindy has so forcibly put it, gained a firm footing in the world without the sword, and without any aid whatever from the secular arm. So far from having the countenance of the State, it triumphed in spite of opposition, persecution, and discouragement. "My kingdom," said Jesus, 'is not of this world. If My kingdom

were of this world, then would My servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is My kingdom not from hence. . . For this end came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth, heareth My voice.”¹

The religion itself, in its early days, offered no worldly attractions or indulgences. It was not, like Islam, an “Easy way.” Whether in withdrawal from social observances deeply tainted with idolatry, the refusal to participate in sacrificial ceremonies insisted on by the rulers, or in the renunciation of indulgences inconsistent with a saintly life, the Christian profession required self-denial at every step.

Nor by
worldly in-
ducements.

But otherwise the teaching of Christianity nowhere interfered with the civil institutions of the countries into which it penetrated, or with any social customs or practices that were not in themselves immoral or idolatrous. It did not, indeed, neglect to guide the Christian life. But it did so by the enunciation of principles and rules of wide and far-reaching application. These, no less than the injunctions of the Corân, served amply for the exigencies of the day. But they have done a vast deal more. They have proved themselves capable of adaptation to the most advanced stages of social development and intellectual elevation. And

Adaptive
principles
and plastic
faculty of
Christianity

¹ John xviii. 36, 37.

what is infinitely more, it may be claimed for the lessons embodied in the Gospel that they have been themselves promotive, if indeed they have not been the immediate cause, of all the most important reforms and philanthropies that now prevail in Christendom. The principles thus laid down contained germs endowed with the power of life and growth which, expanding and flourishing, slowly it may be, but surely, have at the last borne the fruits we see.

**Examples:
Slavery.**

Take, for example, the institution of Slavery. It prevailed in the Roman Empire at the introduction of Christianity, as it did in Arabia at the rise of Islam. In the Moslem code, as we have seen, the practice has been perpetuated. Slavery must be held permissible so long as the Corân is taken to be the rule of faith. The divine sanction thus impressed upon the institution, and the closeness with which by law and custom it intermingles with social and domestic life, make it impossible for any Mahometan people to impugn slavery as contrary to sound morality, or for any body of loyal believers to advocate its abolition upon the ground of principle. There are, moreover, so many privileges and gratifications accruing to the higher classes from its maintenance, that (excepting under the strong pressure of European diplomacy) no sincere and hearty effort can be expected from the Moslem race in the suppression of the inhuman traffic, the

horrors of which, as pursued by Moslem slave traders, their Prophet would have been the first to denounce. Look now at the wisdom with which the Gospel treats the institution. It is nowhere in so many words proscribed, for that would, under the circumstances, have led to the abnegation of relative duties and the disruption of society. It is accepted as a prevailing institution recognized by the civil powers. However desirable freedom might be, slavery was not inconsistent with the Christian profession:—"Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather." The duty of obedience to his master is enjoined upon the slave, and the duty of mildness and urbanity towards his slave is enjoined upon the master. But with all this was laid the seed which grew into emancipation. "*Our Father*" gave the keynote of freedom. "Ye are *all* the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." "There is neither . . . bond nor free, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." "He that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman." The converted slave is to be received "not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved." The seed has borne its proper harvest. Late in time, no doubt, but by a sure and certain development, the grand truth of the equality of the human race, and the right of every man and woman to freedom of thought, and (within reasonable

1 Cor. vii. 21.

Gal. iii. 26, 28.

1 Cor. vii. 22.

Philemon 16

limit of law) to freedom of action, has triumphed; and it has triumphed through the spirit and the precepts inculcated by the gospel eighteen hundred years ago.

Relations
between the
sexes

Nor is it otherwise with the relations established between the sexes. Polygamy, divorce, and concubinage with bondmaids, have been perpetuated, as we have seen, by Islam for all time; and the ordinances connected therewith have given rise, in the laborious task of defining the conditions and limits of what is lawful, to a mass of prurient casuistry defiling the books of Mahometan law. Contrast with this our Saviour's words, "*He which made them at the beginning made them male and female. . . What therefore God hath joined together let no man put asunder.*" From which simple utterance have resulted monogamy, and (in the absence of adultery) the indissolubility of the marriage bond. While in respect of conjugal duties we have such

Matt. xix. 4.

. Cor., vii. 3.

large, but sufficiently intelligible, commands as "to render due benevolence,"—whereby, while the obligations of the marriage state are maintained, Christianity is saved from the impurities which, in expounding the ordinances of Mahomet, surround the sexual ethics of Islam, and cast so foul a stain upon its literature.

Elevation of
woman.

Take, again, the place of woman in the world. We need no injunction of the veil or the harem. As the temples of the Holy Ghost, the body is to

be kept undefiled, and every one is "to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour." Men are to treat "the elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity." Women are to "adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety." These, and such like, maxims embrace the whole moral fitness of the several relations and duties which they define. They are adapted for all ages of time, and for all conditions of men. They are capable of being taken by every individual for personal guidance, according to his own sense of propriety, and they can be accommodated by society at large with a due reference to the habits and customs of the day. The attempt of Mahomet to lay down, with circumstantial minuteness, the position of the female sex, the veiling of her person, and her withdrawal from the gaze of man, has resulted in seclusion and degradation; while the spirit of the gospel, and injunctions like that of "giving honour to the wife as to the weaker vessel," have borne the fruit of woman's elevation, and have raised her to the position of influence, honour, and equality, which (notwithstanding the marital superiority of the husband in the ideal of the Christian family) she now occupies in the social scale.

1 Thes. iv. 4

1 Tim. v. 2.

1 Tim. ii 9

1 Peter iii. 7

In the type of Mussulman government, which (though not laid down in the Corân) is founded upon the spirit of the Faith and the precedent of the

Relations
with the
State.

Prophet, the civil is indissolubly blended with the spiritual authority, to the detriment of religious liberty and political progress. The *Ameer*, or commander of the faithful, should, as in the early times, so also in all ages, be the *Imâm*, or religious chief; and as such he should preside at the weekly Cathedral service. It is not a case of the Church being subject to the State, or the State being subject to the Church. Here (as we used to see in the Papal domains) the Church is the State, and the State the Church. They both are one. And in this, we have another cause of the backwardness and depression of Mahometan society. Since the abolition of the temporal power in Italy, we have nowhere in Christian lands any such theocratic union of Cæsar and the Church, so that secular and religious advance is left more or less unhampered. Whereas in Islam, the hierarchichopolitical constitution has hopelessly welded the secular arm with the spiritual in one common sceptre, to the furthering of despotism, and elimination of the popular voice from its proper place in the concerns of State.

And so, throughout the whole range of political, religious, social and domestic relations, the attempt made by the founder of Islam to provide for all contingencies, and to fix everything beforehand by rigid rule and scale, has availed to cramp and benumb the free activities of life, and to

Christianity
leaves
humanity
free to
expand.

The Coran
checks
progress.

paralyze the natural efforts of society at healthy growth, expansion, and reform. As an author already quoted has so well put it: "*The Corán has frozen Mahometan thought; to obey it is to abandon progress.*"¹

Writers have indeed been found who, dwelling upon the benefits conferred by Islam on idolatrous and savage nations, have gone so far as to hold that the religion of Mahomet may in consequence be suited to certain portions of mankind,—as if the faith of Jesus might peaceably divide with it the world. But surely to acquiesce in a system which reduces the people to a dead level of social depression, despotism, and semi-barbarism, would be abhorrent from the first principles of philanthropy. With the believer, who holds the gospel to be "Good tidings of great joy, *which shall be to all people,*" such a notion is on higher grounds untenable; but even in view of purely secular considerations it is not only untenable, but altogether unintelligible. As I have said elsewhere:—

Is Islam
suitable for
any nation?

Luke ii. 10.

The eclipse in the East, which still sheds its blight on the ancient seats of Jerome and Chrysostom, and shrouds in darkness the once bright and famous Sees of Cyprian and Augustine, has been disastrous everywhere to liberty and progress, equally as it has been to Christianity. And it is only as that eclipse shall pass away, and the Sun of Righteousness again shine forth, that we can look to the nations now dominated by Islam sharing with us those secondary but precious fruits of Divine teaching. Then with the higher and enduring blessings which our faith

¹ Dr. Fairbairn, *Contemporary Review*, p. 865.

bestows, but not till then, we may hope that there will follow likewise in their wake freedom and progress and all that tends to elevate the human race.¹

No sacrifice
for sin, or
redemptive
grace.

Although with the view of placing the argument on independent ground, I have refrained from touching the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, and the inestimable benefits which flow to mankind therefrom, I may be excused, before I conclude, if I add a word regarding them. The followers of Mahomet have no knowledge of God as a *Father*; still less have they knowledge of Him as "*Our Father*,"—the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. They acknowledge, indeed, that Jesus was a true prophet sent of God; but they deny His crucifixion and death, and they know nothing of the power of His resurrection. To those who have found redemption and peace, in these the grand and distinctive truths of the Christian faith, it may be allowed to mourn over the lands in which the light of the Gospel has been quenched, and these blessings blotted out, by the material forces of Islam; where, together with civilization and liberty, Christianity has given place to gross darkness, and it is as if now "there were no more sacrifice for sins." We may, and we do, look forward with earnest expectation to the day when knowledge of salvation shall be given to these

¹ *The Early Caliphate and Rise of Islam*, being the Rede Lecture for 1881, delivered before the University of Cambridge, p. 28.

nations "by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Luke 1.
77-79.

But even apart from these, the special blessings of Christianity, I ask, which now, of the two faiths, bears, in its birth and growth, the mark of a Divine hand, and which the human stamp? Which looks likest the handiwork of the God of Nature who "hath laid the measures of the earth," and "hath stretched the line upon it," but not the less with an ever-varying adaptation to time and place? and which the artificial imitation?

Contrast
between
Divine and
human
work.

Job xxxviii
5.

"As a Reformer, Mahomet did indeed advance his people to a certain point; but as a Prophet he left them fixed immovably at that point for all time to come. As there can be no return, so neither can there be any progress. The tree is of artificial planting. Instead of containing within itself the germ of growth and adaptation to the various requirements of time, and clime, and circumstance, expanding with the genial sunshine and the rain from heaven, it remains the same forced and stunted thing as when first planted twelve centuries ago."¹

Islam.

Such is Islam. Now what is Christianity? Listen to the prophetic words of the Founder Himself, who compares it to the works of NATURE:—

Christianity
compared by
Christ to
the works
of Nature.

"So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground;

Mark iv. 26,
27, 28.

"And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.

"For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself: first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."

¹ *The Corân*, etc., p. 65.

And again:—

Mark iv. 30,
31, 32.

“Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God, or with what comparison shall we compare it?

“It is like a grain of mustard seed, which when it is sown in the earth, is less than all seeds that be in the earth;

“But when it is sown, it groweth up and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches, so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.”

Islam the
work of
man:
Christianity
the work of
God.

Which is *Nature*, and which is *Art*, let the reader judge. Which bears the impress of man's hand, and which that of Him who “is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working?”

In fine, of the Arabian it may be said:

“Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.”

But of Christ,—

Psalm lxxii.
17, 8, 18, 19.

“His name shall endure for ever. His name shall be continued as long as the sun. And men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed.

“He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.

“Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be His glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen, and Amen.”



CHRISTIANITY AND CONFUCIANISM

COMPARED

IN THEIR

TEACHING OF THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN

BY

JAMES LEGGE, LL.D.

Argument of the Tract.

THE writer does not institute a comparison between Christianity as a whole and Confucianism. He does not dwell upon the teaching of Christianity as to the moral and spiritual condition of man by nature, nor on the redeeming and regenerating power of Christianity, but confines himself to a comparison between the teaching of the respective systems on the whole duty of man.

The whole duty of man, according to Christianity, is comprised in the word LOVE. Christ's love to us is to be the measure, and His death for us the motive, of our love to one another. This love will prompt to obedience, self-control, and self-denial. The Christian will seek to be perfect, according to the prayer of the Apostle for the entire sanctification of believers. Christianity teaches the cultivation of the more winning as well as the sterner graces of character.

Confucianism teaches men the discharge of their duties in the various relations of life. It regards the moral nature as conferred on men by God, and so gives a religious sanction to the performance of human duties. The worship of God is confined to the sovereign. The religious sensibilities of the people flow into the worship of parents and ancestors, as a part of filial piety, which is regarded as the first and chief of human duties. The general rule of Confucius and the golden rule of Christ are compared, and the original character of the latter is vindicated. The absence of any glow of piety in the teaching of Confucius, and the uncertainty in which he left his followers about religion, are pointed out.

The superiority of Christian to Confucian teaching is shown to consist in the importance it attaches to the duties of religion, in the nearness of God to men which it reveals, the advantages which this nearness confers, in placing all our social duties under the guardianship of God, and the strength it assures to us in the battle with temptation, in the motive to which it appeals for obedience, in the duties which it inculcates with reference to the five relations of society, in the perfection of the example it offers for our imitation in our sinless High Priest and Saviour, who is the revelation of the Father. Confucianism is shown to be incapable of producing fruits comparable to the character formed by Christianity when its principles have free course. The aggressive character of Christianity, and what is needed in order to win the Chinese to Christ, are indicated.

CHRISTIANITY AND CONFUCIANISM COMPARED

IN THEIR TEACHING OF

THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN.



FROM the teachings of Christianity and Confucianism I have selected and confined myself to one important point, by their treatment of which we may form a judgment as to their comparative worth. The subject chosen, however, as the ground of comparison between them is a testing one, and that in which the cause of Confucianism is specially strong. The courses and styles of life, to the attainment of which they respectively call their followers, will enable the reader to decide which of them is the more suited to secure the complete and harmonious development of our nature, to make men good, and to make them happy.

It was one of the deep, if somewhat enigmatic utterances of Confucius (Analects xv. 28), "Man can enlarge his principles of conduct; it is not those principles that enlarge man." His idea was, that man is greater than any system which he may be called to follow, and that there is that in

The point of comparison chosen.

Confucius on man and his principles

The whole
duty of man.

him which constitutes him its judge, and will enable him to supplement and complete it, if that be necessary. In accordance with that saying, I will endeavour to set forth what Christianity and Confucianism lay down as **THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN**, and then ask my readers to judge of their own selves which of the two is the right teaching; or, if it shall be thought that both are good, then to say which is the better.

The teaching
of Chris-
tianity on
the subject.

Let us begin with Christianity. I prefer to do so, because my readers are probably all acquainted with it. I cannot tell them anything about its teaching on the point in hand which they have not often heard and read. I must refer to it, however, stirring up their minds, it may be, only by way of remembrance, but preparing them thereby all the better to appreciate and estimate what I shall shortly tell them about the teaching of Confucianism. What, then, is the **Whole Duty of Man** according to Christianity?

The Hebrew
preacher.

There will probably occur to most, in answer to this question, the words of the Hebrew preacher (Eccles. xii. 13): "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." When the preacher thus spoke of "the commandments of God," he, no doubt, had in his mind what we call "The Ten Commandments;" the "**Ten Words**," as the Hebrew text of the Bible

has it, in which God summed up His legislation for the infant nation at mount Sinai. Of those commandments "the mediator," Moses, himself gave a summary in the two sentences: "Thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deut. vi. 5); and "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Lev. xix. 18).

The summary of the Ten Commandments by Moses.

It may be said that this was a summary of the Jewish law, while in this Tract we have to do with Christianity. But Christ made it His own. On one occasion, when He was asked by a lawyer, one of the Pharisees, which was the great commandment (Matt. xxii. 36), He answered: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second like *unto it* is this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hangeth the whole law and the prophets." Did not Christ in these words adopt the Mosaic summary of the Jewish law, and repeat it with His own authority?

Adopted by Christ.

But we have been told that that second sentence in the summary of man's duty, as originally delivered, follows the injunction, "Thou shalt not bear any grudge against the children of thy people," so that it was only of national, and not of universal, application. This objection, however, cannot be

Universal in its application.

Whom we
are to love.

urged against the re-affirmation of it by Christ, when, replying to a vicious application of it, in His Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v. 43), He pronounced, "But I say unto you, Love your ENEMIES." Then we have His parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke x. 30-37), in answer to the question, "Who is my neighbour?" teaching us that all who need our sympathy and assistance, without distinction of nation or creed, should be regarded as our neighbours, and be loved and helped by us.

Christ's love
to us to be
the measure
of our love
to one
another.

According to Christianity, therefore, the whole duty of man is comprised in the one little word LOVE. That is "the fulfilling of the law." And Christ went beyond "the law." It was impossible to insist more strongly on the love of God than Moses, or rather than Jehovah Himself speaking by the mouth of Moses, had done; but the love of our neighbour appears in the Gospels enjoined more emphatically than in the summary of it which has come to us with our Lord's approval and commendation. He said: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, even AS I HAVE LOVED YOU, that ye also love one another" (John xiii. 34; comp. xv. 12). These words show the depth of His meaning in the declaration in the Sermon on the Mount, that He was come not to destroy the law or the prophets, but to FULFIL them. And thus those who heard them understood Him. Witness the lan-

guage of "the beloved disciple:" "Hereby know we love, because He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John iii. 16).

Christ's atoning sacrifice to be the motive of our love to one another.

Where there is love—not to say this love—there will be the performance of all its promptings. The duties which we owe will be discharged sincerely, and to the extent of our ability. This implies of course the exercise of self-government, and the regulation of all the faculties in the continent of our nature. Every contrary lust and selfish desire, every angry impulse and passion must be denied lodgment even in the deep and hidden recesses of the breast. He who is seeking to fulfil his whole duty as enjoined by Christ will be striving, under the constraint of love, to be perfect emotionally, intellectually, and practically, a true son of God his Father, a faithful servant of Christ his Lord. The object of the Christian ministry is "for the perfecting of the saints" (Eph. iv. 12). The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "This also we pray for, even your perfecting" (2 Cor. xiii. 9). His prayer for the Thessalonians was, "The God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame" (1 Thess. v. 23). The summary of his teaching, as inculcated on the Philippians, was: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever

What is implied in this love.

The aim of the Christian.

The Apostle's prayer for the sanctification of believers.

Summary of St. Paul's teaching.

things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, —if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil. iv. 8).

Confucian
teaching.

Such is a brief exhibition of the teaching of Christianity on the duty of man. I will leave it for the present, and proceed to show the teaching of Confucianism on the same subject. And I am glad to be able to place in the forefront a description of it by the highest Chinese authority.

Precepts for
the forma-
tion of
character.

The second emperor of the present dynasty (1662–1722), certainly a very great man, published in 1670 what has become known in Europe as the *Khang-hsî Sacred Edict*, a collection of sixteen Precepts, by which his people should form their characters, and order their conduct, involving all principles essential to their goodness and happiness, and to the prosperity of the empire. It was enacted that, on the first and fifteenth day of every month, it should be read in the hearing of the soldiery and people in each statistical division of the country. The emperor’s son and successor, whose reign is called the *Yung-chang* period (1723–1735), published in 1724 an *Amplification of the Precepts* in a high style of composition, forming a volume of elegant essays or sermons, which should be read on those days. But such finished Chinese compositions are not intelligible to a promiscuous audience without commentary

Amplifica-
tion of the
Precepts.

and paraphrase; and by-and-by there appeared a colloquial Exposition of the Essays, admirably adapted for popular use, by Wang Yû-po, the Salt-comptroller of Shen-hsî province. A Han Fang tells us that, having been appointed governor of Canton province in 1808, and become acquainted with Wang's paraphrase, he selected four scholars with very distinct enunciation, to deliver it on the appointed days in the Canton dialect. "The people," he says, "thronged round them, and such a change was effected that they exceedingly loved to hear, and found it easy to practise." He then distributed it throughout the districts, and charged the local officers to proclaim it everywhere, "and not leave a single person, even along the thinly-inhabited coasts of the sea, ignorant and disobedient." The Paraphrase has thus very generally superseded the balanced sentences of the Amplification. The public reading of it approaches more nearly to our popular preaching than anything else in China. Other expositions of the Precepts, some of them profusely illustrated, and others in easy verse, are also widely known. The publication of the Khang-hsî edict has been a great success.

Colloquial exposition of them.

The delivery of it in public.

Other expositions.

The text of the seventh Precept is this: "Discountenance and put away strange principles, in order to exact the correct doctrine." "The correct doctrine" is Confucianism, or the whole duty of man as inculcated by the great sage and the other

The correct doctrine.

The strange principles.

and older sages, whose views it was his boast that he transmitted. "The strange principles" are all systems of doctrine of a contrary character, and teaching other ways of life. Chief among them are Buddhism and Tâoism, which, though tolerated and even supported to some extent by the government of China, are not regarded as orthodox, and should be discountenanced and put away. Christianity also is mentioned, and men are warned against believing it; but it was very little that they knew about it in China two hundred years ago. On what "the correct doctrine" is, the imperial Amplifier says:—

The imperial Amplifier on the correct doctrine.

"Man, born in the position intermediate between heaven and earth, has nothing to attend to but the relationships of **society** and the regular constituents of moral worth, which are daily called into exercise. All should observe and pursue these, the wise as well as the simple. The sages and worthies do not approve of the search after what is abstruse, and the practice of what is marvellous."

The Paraphrast's expansion.

The Paraphrast expands these and one or two more sentences in the following manner:—

"What is most to be feared for the manners and customs of the people is that they become violent and selfish. But if men's hearts be not good, how can their manners and customs be generous and right? The heart of man, indeed, is naturally perfectly upright and correct; but through the existence of corrupt doctrines, men all get to practise and learn what is not good. That their hearts may be good, therefore, we must look to what they learn and practise, and make sure that it is correct and right. Here is man, with his head towards heaven and his feet planted on the earth, in the middle of all existing things;—he is endowed with a natural rectitude all complete; and there are the requirements of duty in his lot. Is there anything

besides, anything marvellous or rare, that he has to do? There are simply the relations of ruler and minister, of father and son, of husband and wife, of elder brother and younger, and of friend and friend. No one, whether intelligent or stupid, may neglect, even for a single day, the courses proper to those relationships. If, besides those courses, beyond your proper lot, you go about to seek after refined and mysterious dogmas, and to engage in strange and marvellous performances, you will show yourselves to be very bad men."

In what they thus say on the seventh Precept, neither the Amplifier nor his Paraphrast tells us what the "regular constituents of our moral nature" are, nor what are the duties of the several members of the five relations. They did not think it necessary to enter on these subjects, their Chinese readers being familiar with them from their early years. It will be well for me, however, to touch briefly on both topics at this point, in order to clear the way for the further prosecution of my argument. It is not necessary nor in accordance with the plan of this Tract, to discuss what is said about the heart of man being naturally upright and correct. "The five regular constituents of our moral nature" are the principles, attributes and faculties, of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and sincerity. The duties of the human lot in the five relations, as stated by Mencius, are "between father and son, affection; between ruler and subject, righteousness; between husband and wife, attention to their separate functions; between elders and younger, a proper distinction;

The seventh
Precept.

The five
regular
constituents
of our moral
nature.

The Chinese
Primer.

and between friends, fidelity.”¹ A more detailed account of these duties is given in what we may call the Chinese Primer, the first book which boys learn at school. “Affection between father and son; concord between husband and wife; kindness on the part of the elder brother, and deference on the part of the younger; order between seniors and juniors; sincerity between friends and associates; respect on the part of the ruler, and loyalty on that of the minister:—these are the ten righteous courses equally binding on all men.”²

Only social
duties
treated in
these state-
ments.

But in these additions to the statements of the authorities which I have been using, there is nothing to indicate clearly that in “the correct doctrine,” the Confucian orthodoxy of China, there is required of men anything but the discharge of their duties in the relations of society. It is not to be wondered at that some Christian writers, in comparing Confucianism and Christianity, and not well acquainted with the former, should contend that we have in it “an attempt to substitute a morality for a theology.”³ I will point out immediately wherein their view is defective; but at present we freely grant to them that in the above

¹ See *Mencius*, III, i., 4. 8.

² This is taken from *The Classic in Lines of Three Characters*. (San Tsze King), by Wang Po-hào, better known perhaps as Wang Yung lin, of our 13th century. The fullest treatment of the duties is in *The Book of the Record of Rites*.

³ See Dr. Matheson, *The Faiths of the World*. Lecture III.

expositions of man's duties there is no mention of any duty which he owes to God. There are the five relations of society :—let him manifest his cognizance of them, and to the utmost of his ability discharge their requirements. There are the five constituents of his moral nature ; let him show his appreciation of them, and regulate that discharge in accordance with them. Let him do this, and there is nothing more that he ought to do. I do not say that this is a poor ideal of human duty, or that it is not a high ideal of it; but it does not say a word about any relation between man and God. The first and great commandment of Christ is: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." On this those Confucian teachers are absolutely silent.

Nothing in this ideal about any relation between man and God.

Does the religion of China, then, teach anything about any worship of God or of other beings? No one who has sufficiently studied writings that have come down to us from an antiquity greater than that of Confucius, and with his approval, or those still older than the beginning of our era, and purporting to record his words and sentiments, will venture to say that it does not.

In the first place, the relations of society and the duties belonging to them are set forth as the appointments of Heaven or God. We have a treatise called "The Doctrine of the Mean," by the grandson of Confucius. It contains a con-

Nevertheless Confucianism sets forth the relations and duties of society as the appointment of heaven.

densed exhibition of his teaching, and begins with this sentence: "What heaven has conferred is called THE NATURE; an accordance with the nature is called THE PATH OF DUTY; the regulation of the path is called THE SYSTEM OF INSTRUCTION." A great monarch, in the eighteenth century, B.C., proclaimed:

A moral sense conferred by God.

"The great God has conferred even on the inferior people a moral sense, compliance with which would show their nature invariably right."¹

A poem of the ninth century B.C. commences thus:

"Heaven, in giving birth to the multitudes of the people, to every faculty and relationship annexed its law. The people possess this normal nature, and they consequently love its normal virtue. Heaven beheld the ruler of Châu, brilliantly affecting It, by his conduct below, and to maintain him, Its son, gave birth to Chung Shan-fû."²

A religious sanction given to all man's duties and relationships.

These passages testify that while man is by his moral nature constituted a law to himself, he is so by the act and decree of God; a religious sanction is given to all his relationships and his performance of their duties.

In the second place, among the relations of

¹ See *The Sacred Books of the East*, III., p. 90.

² *The Sacred Books of the East*, III., p. 425. I have versified the stanza in *The Book of Ancient Poetry*, pp. 334-7:

Heaven made the race of men, designed
 With nature good and large;
 Functions of body, powers of mind,
 Their duties to discharge.
 All men this normal nature own;
 Its normal nature all men crown,
 With love sincere and true.
 Heaven by our Sovereign's course was moved
 And him to aid, Its son approved,
 Gave birth to Chung Shan-fû.

society is that of father and son, or of parent and child. The "affection" belonging to it takes, on the part of the son, the form of filial piety. My readers will all have heard of this as the distinguishing characteristic of the Chinese race. It is so. Filial duty is with them the first and great commandment. "It is," they say, "the first and chief of all human virtues." I do not wish to detract from their commendations of it, nor to deny the general estimate of their observance of it. I look, indeed, on the long-continued existence and growth of the Chinese nation as a fulfilment of the promise annexed to our fifth commandment, "Honour thy father and mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." But now Confucianism inculcates the worship of the dead as a part of filial piety. The sage himself specifies five things as necessary to its full discharge: the utmost reverence, the amplest and most ungrudging support, the greatest anxiety when parents are ill, every demonstration of grief in mourning for them, and the utmost solemnity in sacrificing (or presenting oblations) to them.¹ Quotations need not be multiplied. To bow before the shrines of ancestors and parents, to present offerings to them, and to pray to them,—these things are as much essential to filial duty as obedience to the commands of parents, reverently

Filial duty a distinguishing characteristic of the Chinese race.

The worship of the dead inculcated as part of filial duty.

¹ *The Sacred Books of the East*, III., p. 480.

An element
of religion
in the
highest
moralities of
Confucian-
ism.

honouring them, copying their good example, and ministering to their wants. Thus in this highest of the moralities of Confucianism there is also the element of religion. And it would be easy to substantiate further this point by adducing the worship which the system enjoins, not only of ancestors and parents, but also of the departed great,—of all who have distinguished themselves as legislators, inventors of useful arts, general benefactors, and patriots.¹

Worship of
God in Con-
fucianism.

In the third place, there is in Confucianism a worship of God Himself. From time immemorial, there has been in China the belief of one Supreme Being, first indicated by the name heaven, and then by the personal designation of God as the Supreme Lord and Ruler. For between three and four thousand years at the least, there has been the worship of this Being; but as formally approved and organized by the ordinances of the State, it is confined to the Sovereign for the time being. He renders it in the suburbs of his capital on a few occasions in the course of the year, attended by certain of his nobles and official functionaries; but of the people there are none with him. It was at first, no doubt, a representative worship by the Head of the Family; it continued to be the same when the Family grew into the Tribe; it is still

Confined to
the Sove-
reign.

At first re-
presentation
by the head
of the
family.

¹ See the writer's *Religions of China* (Hodder and Stoughton), pp. 88-90.

the same when the tribe has multiplied, and become the most populous empire on the earth. It has never been extended through the nation or joined in by the multitudes of the people. A most wonderful fact, and most deplorable! The greatest occasion of the imperial religious celebration is at the earliest dawn on the morning of the winter solstice at "the Altar of Heaven." Some of the prayers, or psalms rather, with which the various oblations have been occasionally accompanied, have been remarkable, and have risen to a high style of devotion; but, after all, the whole service is but a form of state ceremonial, of which the people have hardly any knowledge, and which does not contribute to maintain in them a real religious life to any great extent. Where it has that effect, the result is due mainly to a sentence of Confucius, in which, as if to guard against its being considered merely a worship of the great forms or forces of nature, he pronounced that "The ceremonies of the sacrifices to Heaven and Earth are those by which we serve the Supreme God."¹

Never extended through the nation or joined in by the people.

The service a form of state ceremonial.

Does not contribute to maintain in them a real religious life to any great extent.

Debarred from this direct worship of God, the spiritual sensibilities and susceptibilities of the masses of the Chinese have flowed all the more into the worship of their parents and ancestors, and the way has been all the easier for the dissemination among them of the magical pretensions and psy-

The spiritual susceptibilities have flowed into the worship of ancestors

¹ *The Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. xix. 6.

What
remains for
them.

The story of
a young
lady.

Her trust in
heaven.

chical fancies of Tâoism and the idolatries and transmigrations of Buddhism. There remains for them only the natural and indistinct reverence of Heaven, with groanings and complaining appeals to It, or to God in heaven, when they are suffering under calamity or other cause of distress. I have seen "the falling of the tear" in the bitterness of grief, and "the upward glancing of the eye" to the sky above. Recently I was struck with a passage in the story of a young lady pressed to a certain course which, though not contrary to what was right, did not command her full approval. It was not evil, but might be misinterpreted so as to give to another passage in her life the appearance of being evil, though it had been good and even praiseworthy in itself. She wished to avoid it, and to trust in Heaven to bring about, in a perfectly legitimate way, the object which it was intended to serve. "I have heard," she says, "that Heaven is sure to bring to pass the thing of which Heaven has originated the purpose." It was an expression it seemed to me of simple and genuine piety. Such a sentiment and such language, however, are rarely met with in Chinese society or writings. And where they do occur, it is as calculations of the understanding more than gushings of the heart. They are argumentative rather than emotional, expressing the fear to offend Heaven and not the wish to please it. They come short, very far short,

of that love of God which is the first and great commandment of Christianity. I have been reading Chinese books for more than forty years, and any general requirement to "love God," or the mention of anyone as actually "loving" Him, has yet to come for the first time under my eye.

No incitement to love God in Chinese books.

The three considerations which I have urged make it clear that the Confucian system is not a morality merely, but also a religion. That the sage, however, "the Master," as his disciples liked to style him, did not speak of the higher aspects of the system which he found existing in his country; and that he shrank from discussing metaphysical subjects, and even all questions about the existence and operations of God: this is a fact which we must accept, and which no explanation that we may try to give of it will alter. Morality, and its promotion, with the culture of the understanding through the study of the ancient literature, were his chosen themes; and it is with his moral teaching, as I have expressly stated, that we have specially to do in this Tract.

Confucianism a religion

Morality and the culture of the understanding, the chosen themes of Confucius.

We return therefore to the consideration of that; and the first and chief thing that claims our attention is the general rule in which Confucius summed up all his inculcation of the duties of the human relations:—"What ye would not that men should do to you, do not ye do to them." He enunciated this rule several times. Its similarity

The general rule of Confucius.

Contrast
with the
golden rule
of Christ.

to "the golden rule" of our Lord never fails to strike the Christian when he hears or reads it for the first time. It is negative, indeed, while Christ's is positive; but the Chinese sage knew that man ought to take the initiative in doing to others what he would have others do to him. Eight, perhaps nine, of our Ten Commandments are really prohibitions. Was it a knowledge of the difficulty which men find in giving to others what is their due, and of their proneness to think of themselves first, and act with a view to their own advantage, which made Confucius give the negative form to his comprehensive rule?

Misunder-
standing of
the rule of
Confucius.

To say that "he did not mean to do anything more by it than suggest a law for the well-being of the State," preventing retaliations which would end in political anarchy:¹—this is a strange undervaluing both of the man and his object. At the same time, there is one passage in Confucius' history from which it is natural to conclude that the rule was prompted chiefly by his sentiment of justice or instinctive feeling of what was right. One of his contemporaries, Lâu-tsze, the reputed founder of Tâoism, had been led, by the peculiar nature of his philosophical system, to teach "the returning of good for evil." This seemed "strange doctrine" to some of the disciples of Confucius, and they consulted him about it. His reply was: "What

¹ Dr. Matheson's Lecture III., *The Faiths of the World*, p. 86.

then will you return for good? Recompense injury with justice, and return good for good." Higher than this he could not rise.

The highest point to which Confucius could rise. Analects xiv.; ch. 36.

Passing now to "the golden rule of Christ," we must pronounce it a greater error to argue that He was indebted for it to what we may call "the silver rule of Confucius." And yet this has been more than surmised. It has been said:

"That Confucius is the author of this precept is undisputed, and therefore it is indisputable that Christianity has incorporated an article of Chinese morality."

Dr. Matheson's Lecture, *Faiths of the World*, p. 83.

There is not the slightest evidence that any knowledge of the Chinese sage or of his teachings had penetrated to Judea at so early a time; and Christ subjoined to His rule a statement of the sources from which He formulated it in the words, "This is the law and the prophets." It was with Him the essence of the two commandments, to love God supremely, and to love our neighbours as ourselves. This is the secret of its positive form. It is the outgushing demand of love, while the other is the constrained expression of justice. And hence it was that in the same Sermon on the Mount, Christ pronounced, in language more unequivocal and full than that of Lâo-tsze, "I say unto you, Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you; pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you" (Luke vi. 27, 28).

Christianity did not derive its golden rule from the teaching of Confucius.

The secret of the positive form of the golden rule of Christ.

I have, in the above pages, endeavoured to set

The defects
of Con-
fucianism.

No glow of
piety in the
sayings of
Confucius.

He had no
mission to
teach
religion, no
Scripture to
teach him
about God.

Much to
admire in
his practical
teaching.

forth generally the teaching of Christianity and Confucianism on the whole duty of man. Where the former is most emphatic, the latter is all but silent. The old religion of China was very defective in what it required of man to God, and "the Master" said very little to supplement it. There was no glow of piety in his utterances. He never called his disciples to join with him in adoring God, as the perfection of beauty, the Framers of our bodies, and the Father of our spirits, in Whom we live and move and have our being, the Source of all our good, and the Fountain of our greatest comfort and consolation. He left his countrymen to the uncertain gropings and vague monitions of natural religion. I do not ask my readers to join with me and pronounce a stern condemnation of him for this. He had no mission to teach religion. He had no book to instruct him as to the character and doings of God, at all akin to our Scriptures. He had no gift or aptitude for anything like theology.

But when we turn to the Confucian teaching of the duties of man to other men, we ought to accord to it much appreciation. It is at once comprehensive and minute. The analysis of society into the five relations covers the whole ground. It is a piece of philosophical generalization of which we should not be slow to recognize the value and truth. And the duties incumbent in those relations are enjoined

in hundreds of passages with explicitness and point. One is often grieved to read the incautious assertions of writers who think that apart from our Christian Scriptures there are no lessons for men about their duties, and that heathendom has in consequence never been anything but a slough of immoral filth and outrageous crime. Such writers betray their ignorance of the systems and peoples about which they affirm such things, and their ignorance also of the sacred volume which they wish to exalt. Their advocacy is damaging rather than beneficial to Christianity.

Incautious statements about the state of heathendom.

But while I do not hesitate to avow this conviction, I am at the same time persuaded that there is not a single human duty set forth by Confucianism which is not also recognized and more fully enjoined by Christianity. In Christianity, moreover, there is no admixture of error in regard to the ground of the duty, or the details of its requirements from which the account of it in Confucianism is by no means free. In *The Eclipse of Faith*, of the late Professor Henry Rogers, he says (p. 196) that

All human duties set forth more fully in Christianity than in Confucianism.

Christian teaching free from error.

“If his sceptical opponent would do as he had done, and compile a selection of the principal precepts and maxims from the most admirable ethical works of antiquity, and compare them with two or three of the summaries of similar precepts in the New Testament, he would at once feel how much more vivid, touching, animated, and even comprehensive was the scriptural expression of the same truth.”

Confucius
and
Aristotle.

When he so expressed himself, Professor Rogers was thinking of the ancient Grecian moralists, and especially of Aristotle. The sage of China needs not to hide a diminished head, when placed amidst the Stagirite and his compeers; but the judgment is true as well, if it be applied to his sayings and those of all his school, in comparison with the teachings of Christianity. I can set to my seal that it is so.

On the ground of all that has been said above, I venture now to ask the assent of my readers to the following conclusions regarding the superiority of the Christian teaching of the whole duty of man.

Christianity
attaches
more import-
ance to the
duties of
religion.

I. It is superior to the Confucian teaching because it attaches so much greater importance to the duties of religion, and gives so much fuller a disclosure of their reasonableness and nature. Confucianism, indeed, affirms the relation between men and God; but its understanding of that relation is incomplete, and its teaching both about it and the duties springing from it is consequently imperfect. It keeps the masses of the people at an awful distance from God. Only "the One man," the sovereign of the Chinese race, is permitted to present to Him directly the offerings of reverence, gratitude, and prayer. Christianity, on the contrary, teaches how God is never far from any one of us, how He accepteth not the persons of princes, neither regardeth the rich man more than the poor, how

No direct
access to
God in Con-
fucianism.

The
nearness of
God
according to
Christianity.

we all have to do with Him and how He is always near to all that call on Him. Of the dignity and strength, the peace, security, and hope which this relation between God and him imparts to man's being and experience amid the vicissitudes of life, so various and often painful, I do not speak;—our subject is his duty. But any system which does not make provision for the discharge of our religious duties, which does not in fact summon men to them, and encourage them to resort to them, and delight themselves in them, must be pronounced incomplete and insufficient. Such a system is Confucianism.

The peace, safety, and hope it imparts.

II. The Christian teaching is superior to the Confucian because it makes God the Guardian of all the duties obligatory on men even in their social relations. With what majesty and power the announcement, "I am the Lord," or "I am the Lord your God," comes in at the close of very many of the ordinances in the Mosaic legislation! For example, "Therefore shall ye keep Mine ordinance that ye commit not any one of these abominable customs, and that ye defile not yourselves therein: I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus xviii. 30). "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord" (Leviticus xix. 18). Not less powerfully though less rhetorically, it is said in the New Testament: "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or what-

The divine guardianship of human duties according to the books of Moses.

New Testament teaching.

The
Christian
rule.

Confucian-
ism leaves
a man to
his own
strength.

Christianity
assures him
of Divine
help.

soever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31). And this injunction is completed, according to the Christian rule, by the same apostle: "Whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Col. iii. 17). Confucianism prefers to speak in this wise: "If you do this, if you do not do that, how can you regard yourself as a man?" That is all very well. But it leaves man to fight the battle of temptation in his own strength. He is strongest, however, when he is most humble. The assurance of God's presence and guardianship doubly arms him. It helps him, if he fall, to rise again; and if he seem to fail or be overthrown, he can yet write victory on his shield. To use the words of the Apostle Peter, "This is acceptable, if, for conscience towards God, a man endure grief, suffering wrongfully" (1 Peter ii. 19).

Christianity
appeals to
the motive
of love.

III. Still looking merely at the duties springing out of the social relations, the Christian teaching is superior to the Confucian, because the motive on which it requires their discharge is nobler and more powerful. That motive, we have seen, is love, while the Confucian motive is the sentiment of justice or right. Now love takes the performances out of the category of duty in which there is the element of constraint, and transforms them into that of gracious ministry. The love

will always operate in the sphere of right; but its constraint is of itself. At the very best the doer of justice is a servant of God, but the doer of love is a child of God. The service of duty may be slow and grudging; the service of love is prompt and untiring. Duty asks, "Is this enough?" Love asks, "Can I do anything more?" This is the operation of all love. Can its range and effectiveness over the whole being be calculated when the true nature of the Christian attribute is appreciated, when its measure, as has been pointed out above, is the love with which Christ loved us?

How love operates.

IV. The Christian teaching in regard to the five relations of society themselves is better than the Confucian. We have spoken of the relation between parent and child, and of the filial duty obligatory on the child. It includes in Confucianism the worship of the deceased parent as well as of remoter ancestors. Honour to the living parent is what Christianity requires; but it knows nothing of the worship of the dead, and of oblations and prayers to them. We accept with sorrow the fact that our parents have gone by death away from our circle; we cherish the memory of them and seek to copy their virtues; but we find that it would be in vain to try and have communion with them over any religious feast. Our belief and practice are more true and healthy than those of the Confucian.

Christian and Confucian teaching with respect to the relations of parents and children contrasted.

And while the requirements of filial duty in the latter are so stringent that I have often known them become a grievous yoke, a burden which Chinese sons were unable to bear, little is found in the Confucian writings to instruct or caution parents in their treatment of their children. More than enough is said of the rights of the parent, less than enough of the rights of the children. There are two texts in the New Testament, of the wisdom of which my readers will not entertain any doubt, while yet I have always found them very distasteful not only to Chinese literati but also to the people. One is that in which the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "The children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children" (2 Cor. xii. 14). The other is also from St. Paul (Colossians iii. 21): "Fathers, provoke not your children, that they be not discouraged."

Christian precepts with respect to the duty of parents to children distasteful to the Chinese.

Another of the five relations of society is that of husband and wife;—"it is the one, indeed," as Chinese writers say, "out of which all the other relations grow." And many fine and beautiful sentiments are found in them on marriage. But the position of woman in China has always been an inferior one. Girls are of small account in a family as compared with boys. Infanticide, mainly owing, I believe, to the poverty of the people, is more common than in any western country, but it

The position of woman in China always an inferior one.

is always female infanticide. A woman should not have any mind of her own, nor take the initiative even in what is good.¹ If she come out of the strict seclusion of her own apartments and domestic duties, her influence will prove to be for evil.² There is indeed only one wife, "one correct wife," in a family, but from the oldest times concubinage has been the rule in China. The ancient Yâo, whose beneficent influence, according to Confucius, "corresponded to that of Heaven, and whose virtue was so great that the people could find no name for it,"³ yet gave his two daughters in marriage to the same man at the same time.⁴ The life of woman in China is truly a hard and inferior one. It is not till she becomes a mother that she shares in the regard due to the higher party in the relation of parent and child. Even then she is subject to the law of "the three obediences,"⁵ and is bound, if a widow, to obey her eldest son, as she had, in the earlier stages of her life, been bound to obey first her parents, and then her husband. I have often thanked the Apostle Peter in spirit for his words, "Ye husbands, give honour to the woman as unto the weaker vessel, as being also joint-heirs of the grace of life" (1 Peter

The prevalence of infanticide.

Concubinage the rule in China.

The life of woman in China a hard one.

Christian teaching on a husband's duties.

¹ *The Sacred Books of the East*, III., p. 350.

² *The She King, or Book of Ancient Poetry*, p. 347.

³ Confucian Analects, VIII., ch. 19.

⁴ *The Sacred Books of the East*, III., p. 36.

⁵ See the Prolegomena to my *Chinese Classics*, I., pp. 104, 105.

Nothing parallel to this in Confucianism.

iii. 7). In all my reading in Chinese literature I have not met with so kindly and generous a sentiment.

There is not so much to object to in the Confucian teaching about the other three relations of society. I pass on to the last point of superiority in the Christian teaching, with the general remark that too much authority is assigned to the superior member in each category, and too much deference required from the inferior.

V. The Christian teaching of human duty is superior to the Confucian, because it is commended and enforced by the perfect example of its Author. "What I wish to do," said Mencius, the ablest expounder of the Confucian system: "What I wish to do is to learn to be like Confucius."

The example of Confucius.

The Chinese Classics, 11., Book II. Pt. i., 2. 22.

He goes on to adduce the estimate of "the Master" given by several of "the disciples," with the opinion of one of whom we must here content ourselves, that of Yû Jo:—

"There is the Ch'i-lin among quadrupeds, the phoenix among birds, the Thâi mountain among ant-hills, and the Ho and the sea among rain-pools. (Though they are different in degree), they are the same in kind; and so the sages among men are also the same in kind. But they stand out from their fellows, and rise above the crowd; and from the birth of mankind till now there never has been one so complete as Confucius."

I have no pleasure in shattering this idol, nor would I lay a rude hand or an effacing finger on the reputation of the Chinese "Master." He was a great man and a good man, and deserved well of his own country and of the world. Yet it is a

true saying that "the best of men are but men at the best." He was not a perfect character. On one occasion, immediately after enunciating his "silver rule," he subjoined :

Confucius
an imperfect
character,
according
to his own
confession

"In the way of the superior man there are four things, to not one of which have I as yet attained. To serve my father as I would require my son to serve me : to this I have not attained ; to serve my ruler as I would require my minister to serve me : to this I have not attained ; to serve my elder brother as I would require my younger brother to serve me : to this I have not attained ; to set the example in behaving to a friend as I would require him to behave to me: to this I have not attained."¹

The Chinese character which I have here translated by "I," is the personal name of Confucius, and ties his readers down to accept his words as his own acknowledgment of his personal imperfection. They are not the words of a sham "humility," as Chinese commentators contend, nor an example merely of the way in which men should measure others as they measure themselves; but we do not think less of him, we think indeed more of him, because he was thus conscious of his own incompetencies, and that he fell short of his own standard of duty.

One of the four things, again, which Confucius was fond of teaching was "truthfulness ;"² and yet it is difficult to maintain that, according to our idea of the duty of a historian, he was not untruthful in his accounts of men and events.³ I cannot resist

His teaching
about truth-
fulness.

¹ *The Doctrine of the Mean*, 13. 4. ² *Confucian Analects*, VII., 24.

³ See the Prolegomena to *The Chinese Classics*, Vol v. pp. 40-49

Confucius was not truthful in his accounts of men and events.

the impression that his example in this respect has lowered the standard of this important virtue among his countrymen.

No consciousness of sin in Christ. His appeal to His enemies.

Confucius was not a perfect character; and I appeal to my readers whether, if any acknowledgment on the part of Christ, similar to that which I have just adduced, were to be found in our Gospels, it would not sound very strange, and be disturbing to their faith. Christ could say, on the contrary, to his enemies, "Which of you convicteth me of sin" (John viii. 46)? After nearly nineteen centuries, throughout Christendom, the instances are very exceptional of any men who have ventured to insinuate a judgment concerning Him, different from that of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "He was in all points tempted like as (*we are, yet*) without sin" (iv. 15). "Such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners" (vii. 26). Even such men as Rousseau, and the late John Stuart Mill, whom we must class among unbelievers, have borne concurrent testimony as to the impression made by His life and words upon their minds.¹

A sinless High Priest needed by us.

The testimony of enemies.

Christ was indeed the perfect Teacher, and the perfect Exemplar of what He taught. The more that we press on to be like Him, the more do we

¹ See Present Day Tract, No. III., *Christ the Central Evidence of Christianity*, by the Rev. Principal Cairns. See there also, pp. 12-16, the discriminating observations on "Modern Theories of Christ's Moral Excellence."

feel that we fail to be so. But He said, "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father;" and the more conscious we are of copying His example, and endeavouring to realize in ourselves "the mind that was in Him," the greater is our peace, and the brighter our hope that we are going on to be "perfect, even as our heavenly Father is perfect."

Christ our perfect example. The revelation of the Father.

Our peace in proportion to our possession of His mind.

I have not, in writing this Tract, played the part of an advocate whose object is to win his cause. My endeavour has been to describe the case of both systems on the point laid down at the outset,—to describe it dispassionately, and yet sufficiently for my readers to form a judgment on the subject discussed themselves.

I think that the evidence of facts bears out the conclusion as to the superiority of Christianity to which I have come. It is, indeed, an eternal truth that "by their fruits" we know both men and systems; but though I have tried, over a long series of years, to weigh the moral condition of the Chinese people as compared with our own, and that of other nominally Christian peoples, I have felt the difficulty of doing so in an even balance, and there has frequently occurred to me the warning in the Sermon on the Mount: "Judge not. that ye be not judged."

An appeal to the fruits of the two systems

Take the Chinese people as a whole, apart from the points on which I have already given my opinion, and there is much about them to like and

Chinese
virtues.

even to admire. They are cheerful, temperate, industrious, and kindly; and in those respects they will bear a comparison, perhaps a favourable comparison, with the masses of our own population. The ancient and universal use of tea as their ordinary drink has been beneficial to their habits. I found those of them who had any position in society for the most part faithful to their engagements and true to their word. I thought of them better, both morally and socially, when I left them, than when I first went among them, more than thirty years before. Their civilisation has developed under very different conditions from our own. They are less enlightened, very much less enlightened, and less capable of comprehensive views, and more superstitious. They have learned almost nothing from abroad, and are more conservative, thinking much of the past, and little of the future. Still they deserve our esteem; and they measure foreigners from their own standpoints, weighing them as well as they can in the balances of "benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and sincerity." Their Confucianism has done much for them, and its teaching of human duty has modified the practical influence which the systems of Tàoism and Buddhism have on multitudes of them.

Their
civilisation,
enlighten-
ment, and
superstition.

Their con-
servatism.

The short-
comings of
Christendom.

On the other hand, we ourselves in this and the other nations of Christendom come far short of the standard of duty and character which

we ought to be aiming after. Where our Christian principles, religious and moral, indeed, have free course, as they have in millions, they produce a humanity with which there is nothing in China worthy to be compared; but in our social and national condition there are many things that may well make us lay our hands on our mouths, and cease from judging hardly of the heathen Chinese. The best promise of a better state for ourselves and the world is in the growing conviction that we need to rise more to the height of our privileges, and in the individual and combined efforts constantly called forth to remove evils that are brought to light. This is one remarkable feature of the different influence which the two systems that we have been comparing have on their adherents. Confucianism tends to make men satisfied with what they are, while true Christianity makes them dissatisfied that they are not better. Then the former system has not in it an impulsive spirit of propagandism. I have heard the saying among the people that "the Four Books do not go out beyond the four seas environing the Middle Land;" whereas the last command of Christ was that His followers should "go and make disciples of all the nations." No one who has become imbued with the principles of Christianity can be satisfied till he has realised "a new moral world" in himself, and sees a real progress to the same

The fruits of Christianity incomparably better than those of Confucianism wherever Christian principles have free course.

Confucianism makes men self-satisfied, Christianity makes them dissatisfied with themselves.

The aggressive character of Christianity

The slow
progress of
Christianity
a mystery.

The Spirit in
Christianity.

How the
Chinese are
to be won to
Christ.

goal in the manners and institutions of his own country and in the world at large. How so many centuries have elapsed since the delivery of the Sermon on the Mount, and the "lifting up" on the Cross, and the rising from the tomb, and Christendom should remain so imperfectly Christian, and so great a portion of mankind be still non-Christian:—this is a mystery which I will not try to fathom. But there is a spirit in Christianity that nerves its members to continue the struggle with what is evil in and around themselves, and maintains the consecration of time and labour and talents to bring "all the nations" to the fellowship of the Gospel. If we are to do our part in weaning the Chinese from their inordinate attachment to their sage and his teaching, and bringing the nation to "mew its mighty age, and kindle her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam," it can only be by our showing that, in all our intercourse with them, politically, commercially, and in other ways, we are ruled by the principles of love and righteousness, which blend together in "the golden rule" of Christ, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them."

THE ZEND-AVESTA
AND
THE RELIGION OF THE PĀRSĪS

BY

J. MURRAY MITCHELL, M.A., LL.D.

Argument of the Tract.

OF the great religions of antiquity that have survived to the present time, the system which is affirmed by its followers to have been promulgated by the famous Zoroaster is one of the most remarkable. It is now professed only by the Parsees of India and their brethren, the Zoroastrians of Persia ; but it was once a widely-extended and influential faith, with notable characteristics peculiar to itself. The sacred book of the Zoroastrians is the Zend-Avesta (or Avesta). Of the founder of the religion we cannot speak with certainty ; and the same thing may be said of the history of Zoroastrianism up to the time of Darius, the son of Hystaspes. Little was known in Europe regarding the system till 1771.

The Tract examines in succession the theology, the ritual, the ethics, and the jurisprudence of the Avesta. The theology is not homogeneous ; the Avesta contains a quasi monotheism, dualism, and polytheistic nature-worship. Starting with the same root-ideas as Hinduism, Zoroastrianism developed them differently ; it rose nearer to Monotheism, and it avoided Pantheism. One great excellence of the system is that it connects nothing immoral with the character or worship of God. Its most distinctive mark is its strong dualism ; it asserts the existence from eternity of two principles or powers—one good, one evil : the former the creator of all good, the latter the creator of all evil. The Zoroastrian must share in the great struggle between good and evil ; which is finally to issue in the triumph of the former. There is no image-worship in Zoroastrianism. Fire is the great visible object of homage. But everything in the good creation is, or may be, worshipped. Homage is rendered both to the outward object and the being presiding over it.

Nothing in the Zoroastrian ritual is more remarkable than its elaborate purifications in connection with ceremonial defilement. Among Gentile religions, Zoroastrianism ranks high in point of morality ; but the whole Avesta is lacking in depth both of reflection and emotion. Finally, a brief comparison is made between Zoroastrianism and Christianity.

THE ZEND-AVESTA

AND THE

RELIGION OF THE PÂRSÎS.



VERY few of the religions of antiquity have survived to the present day. For example, the impure divinities of Syria and the brutish gods of Egypt have completely disappeared.

Of the surviving religions of antiquity Zoroastrianism is one of the most remarkable.

Peor and Baalim
Forsake their temples dim. . .
Nor is Osiris seen
In Memphian grove or green,
Trampling the unshowered grass with lowings loud.

The divinities of Greece and Rome have, in like manner, passed away. Zeus no longer sways from the summit of Olympus his sceptre over "gods and men;" and a Christian church now occupies the spot on which stood in ancient days the temple of Jupiter, the guardian of the Capitol.

Of those ancient systems of religion that have come down to our times one of the most remarkable

is the one which is embodied in the Zend-Avesta.¹ The faith propounded in the Avesta is usually called Zoroastrianism; since, according to its professors, it was originally inculcated by the celebrated Zoroaster. It is also frequently called Pársíism, as being still followed by the interesting body of people in Western India, known by the name of Pársís, and also by the small remnant of the same race in Persia.

First
inculcated
by Zoro-
aster.

Still
followed
by the
Pársís.

There are not a few questions connected with the Avesta and the history of Zoroastrianism which are still matters of keen controversy. We shall not enter into these, but shall, in a great degree, confine our attention to matters in which there exists a large measure of agreement among Oriental scholars. Happily, these are not few in number; nor are they by any means devoid of interest. In these days, when so much attention is paid to the comparative study of religions, the Avesta faith ought by no means to be overlooked. The system possesses some striking peculiarities. Farther, it has had a very remarkable history. Most important problems are involved in its relations to Hinduism, Judaism, the Babylonian religion, the Gnostic heresies, and the great system of Manicheism; and in the Mithraic mysteries,

It has
striking
peculiarities
and an
interesting
history.

¹ The name Avesta is more correct than Zend-Avesta. More exact would be the spelling *Avastá*; but we adopt the more usual form.

which were mainly of Persian origin, its influence spread extensively over the Roman empire, and even as far west as Britain.

Much had been written regarding Zoroaster, and many had been the speculations regarding his doctrines; but no satisfactory conclusions could be reached so long as the Avesta remained unknown. Even before the Christian era Zoroaster had become a mythical personage, and forged oracles were ascribed to him which only increased the perplexity. The laborious researches of scholars like Dr. Thomas Hyde¹ are deserving of high respect; but such men had to reason from *data* always insufficient and often untrustworthy. A new era in the study of Zoroastrianism began with the labours of Anquetil du Perron. The story of the travels and researches of this enthusiastic explorer reads almost like a romance. He went to India in quest of the venerable book ascribed to Zoroaster; found it among the Parsi priests of Surat; and, after years of toilsome investigation into its doctrines, returned in triumph with his prize to Europe. He published a French translation of it, with accompanying dissertations, in 1771. The work at once excited the greatest interest. This, after some time, began to diminish, mainly

Dr. Hyde's
researches.

Anquetil du
Perron.

¹ *Veterum Persarum et Parthorum et Medorum religionis historia*. 2nd edition. Oxford, 1760. The first edition, with a slightly different title, was published at Oxford in 1700.

in consequence of the faulty character of the translation, which was frequently very obscure, and not infrequently incorrect. During rather more than the last fifty years, however, the study of the Avesta has been prosecuted by a succession of able men with unflagging zeal, and with no inconsiderable success.

Date of the
Avesta.

We can trace the Avesta, as we find it, up to the time of the Sasanian dynasty in Persia. The Persian empire was restored in the year 226 after Christ by Ardashir Bâbegân, the first of the Sasanian line. He was a man of no common force of character; bold and successful as a warrior, and skilful in administration. In building up his kingdom he called religion to his aid. He earnestly sought to collect the writings that inculcated the ancient faith of Zoroaster; and several of his successors persevered in the attempt. The canon of the Avesta was fixed under Shâpur II., about the year 350; revision and condensation were effected in the reign of Khosru Parviz, between 531 and 579. The Avesta, as we possess it, may thus be safely traced back at least to the sixth century after Christ. We must allow for errors of transcription in the case of what had long been a dead language. Uncouth and unintelligible phrases abound in the work; the text is often manifestly incorrect, and critics are sorely tempted to try the undesirable expedient of conjectural

State of the
text.

emendation. Still, on the whole, here stands the Avesta, very nearly as it must have stood some thirteen, or even fifteen, centuries ago. But farther: although collected in the days of the Sasanian kings, we have no reason to believe that it was then *composed*. An extensive literature existed in Persia before the Macedonian conquest. The tradition of the Parsis is that Alexander—"the accursed wretch Sikandar," as they call him—burnt all their books, with the exception of a few fragments. The tradition cannot count for much; for the great conqueror was generally tolerant in matters of religion, and pursued, as far as possible, a policy of conciliation. The disappearance of the ancient books is rather to be regarded as the result of the centuries of confusion that succeeded the Macedonian conquest over the countries in which the Zoroastrian faith generally prevailed. Be this as it may, we have reason to believe that by far the greatest part of the Avesta was composed at various dates ranging over the space from about the seventh to the fourth century before Christ. Portions may be still more recent; and it is possible, and even probable, that some additions were made as late as the fourth century *after* Christ, or even later. The work, as it stands, is not only fragmentary, but chaotic; wonderfully little skill having been exhibited in the arrangement of its component parts.

Persian literature before the Macedonian conquest.

Disappearance of the ancient books.

The greater part of the Avesta probably composed between the 4th and 7th century B.C.

Portions more recent

About Zoroaster himself we must say a few

Zoroaster
probably a
Mede.

His era.

words. Some able men doubt his very existence, and find in his history only a mythical description of elemental war—an atmospheric storm.¹ On the whole, however, we hold that he actually existed, and that he was possibly a Bactrian, but probably a Mede. There is reason to believe that, while the Medes were under Assyrian dominion, their religion had to some extent become mixed with that of the conquerors; but that, when the foreign yoke was thrown off, an earnest attempt was made to revive the ancient Aryan faith. With this reformation we may perhaps, provisionally, connect the name of Zoroaster. Thus, in round numbers, we can with some probability assign his era to the commencement of the sixth century, or perhaps 610 B.C. Such, at least, was Dr. Haug's final opinion.²

On these questions, however, we can as yet attain to no more than plausible conjecture, and all dogmatism is out of place.³ Even the name of

¹ Professor Darmesteter and others. See his treatise, *Ormuzd et Ahriman, passim*.

² Haug, who at first maintained that Zoroaster might have been as ancient as Moses, and must have been before 1000 B.C., in later years altered his opinion, and supported the view now expressed. It nearly agrees with that of the Parsis. But the question is by no means finally settled. Professors Roth and Tiele will not admit the older part of the Avesta to be later than from 1000 to 800 B.C.

³ M. Renan justly remarks: Il n'est pas bon dans ces difficiles études de croire tenir l'absolue vérité.—*Journal Asiatique*, 1880, p. 27.

the great teacher—in Zend, *Zarathustra*—has received no satisfactory explanation. We may believe—still, it is only a plausible conjecture—that the Avesta religion arose to the south-east of the Caspian Sea, among a race still semi-nomadic, but inclining more and more to pastoral and agricultural life. It seems to have powerfully affected Bactria and Media, before it entered Persia. In the last-named country the precepts of the Avesta were but partially submitted to during the earlier reigns, from that of Cyrus downwards; but the power of the Magi—the priests—with a short interruption after the death of the Pseudo-Smerdis, appears to have gone on steadily increasing, until the Macedonian conquest shattered it to pieces. The successors of Alexander reigned eighty years over Persia. Under the Parthian power which succeeded, the Magi slowly recovered a certain measure of their authority; and Valkhash (Vologeses), one of the later kings, seems to have begun the work of collecting the scattered fragments of the sacred books. The Parthian dominion was overthrown by Ardashir Bâbegân, who has been mentioned above; and, under him and his successors, Zoroastrianism obtained a far more influential position than it had ever previously held. This it retained until Persia was conquered by the Arabs, in the middle of the seventh century after Christ.

Late and slow growth of Zoroastrianism in Persia.

Its high place in the second Persian empire.

Division of
the Avesta.

The Avesta, as it now stands, is not so large in size as the Christian Bible. It consists of the following parts:—

The YASNA, including the five Gâthas, or Hymns.

The VANDIDAD.

The VISPARAD.

The YASHTS.

A few short prayers called AFRIGAN, NYAYISH, and GAH.

The SIROZAH, or Calendar of the thirty days of the month.

Prayers and
sacrificial
rites.

The meaning of the word Yasna is *sacrifice*. This division of the Avesta contains the prayers offered along with sacrificial rites. The Gâthas, which are its most important part, are written in a different dialect from the rest of the Avesta, and are very probably of a more ancient date.

The
legislation
of the
Avesta.

The Vandidad contains the legislation of the Avesta. The name is characteristic; it signifies *given against the demons*.

Objects
invoked.

The Visparad contains a collection of prayers very similar to those in the Yasna. The name means *all heads*, or *chiefs*; it is so called because the chief objects of the good creation are invoked in it.

The Yashts. This name is connected with

Yasna, which has been explained above. The term *yasht* properly means *worshipping*. A Yasht is properly a prayer or hymn in which one deity is more especially singled out for adoration.

Prayers addressed to one deity.

It certainly is not easy to see any logical principle ruling the division and arrangement of the parts of the *Avesta*.

We proceed, however, to the examination of the book as we find it. We shall speak successively of the following subjects:—

- I. The Theological system of the *Avesta*.
- II. The Ritual.
- III. The Ethical and Judicial systems.

I. THE THEOLOGY.

WHEN we proceed to examine the theology of the book we are at once struck with the conflicting character of its doctrines. We discover in one place either Monotheism, or what approaches it; in another place, decided Dualism; in a third, Polytheism. We cannot divest ourselves of the belief that such jarring creeds imply diversity of origin. If they arose in the same country, they must have done so at different epochs. Yet when we strive to arrange the systems in the chronological order of their sequence, we are perplexed by the fact that no division of the *Avesta* is homogeneous in its doctrine; discordant voices often

Conflicting doctrines in the theology

unexpectedly break in upon us. The most that we can say is that the Gâthas, on the whole, come nearest to Monotheistic teaching; the Vandidad is more tinged with Dualism; while the Yasna (except the Gâthas) and the Visparad are more Polytheistic, and the Yashts are the most decidedly so of all. Difficult as it is to theorize on the chronological relations of these systems of thought, one is irresistibly driven to do so. Professor Spiegel, who has devoted a laborious life to the study of the Avesta, holds that the order was not first polytheism, then dualism, then monotheism, but that the monotheism preceded the dualism. We also believe that a kind of monotheism came first. But this point requires explanation.

The chronological relations of these systems in the Avesta.

Ahura Mazda and Varuna originally the same deity.

Their counterparts are Zeus and Jupiter.

The conception of a supreme divinity common to the great divisions of the Aryan race.

There can be little doubt that Ahura Mazda, the chief divinity in the Avesta, was originally the same as the Varuṇa Asura of the Veda. (Ahura is simply the Zend form of Asura, which means *Lord*.) Varuna is etymologically the same as the Greek *ὐρανός*, heaven; and Varuna was the heaven-god. A very lofty character is ascribed to this deity; if the Veda ever approaches the conception of holiness, it is in connection with Varuna it does so. The counterparts of Varuna, the heaven-god, are found in Zeus, Jupiter, and Ahura Mazda; and it may be held as demonstrated that the conception of a supreme divinity, wise, powerful, and good, was common to the four great divisions of

the Aryan race,—the Greeks, Romans, Hindus, and Iranians. It must have belonged to them before they separated from each other. Yet, although supreme, this divinity was not sole; he was, in the phrase which meets us so frequently from the time of Homer downwards, “the father of gods and men;” but he received no exclusive homage.

The supreme divinity not sole.

After the other branches of the Aryan family had migrated to the west, the Iranians and Hindus evidently remained for some time together; and hence, many elements are common to the two systems of religious thought. But, ere long, the Indo-Iranian stream divided into two parts, which were never to re-unite. Each of the two systems of faith now received its own special development.

Iranians and Hindus.

In India, Varuna was gradually divested of his serene majesty. Even in Vedic times Indra, the tumultuous god of the lower sky, who had none of his lofty attributes, was exalted into the place of Varuna; and other gods were gradually multiplied. But in Irân the authority of Ahura Mazda (*i.e.*, the wise Lord¹) became more fully recognized than before. His moral attributes also were never obscured. Still, Ahura Mazda falls very far below the divinity who is revealed in the Jewish Scriptures. He is not a purely spiritual being. He is

Varuna lost his high position in India.

Not so Ahura Mazda.

Still the character of the latter is very defective.

Not a purely spiritual being.

¹ Haug does not admit that Mazda means *wise*. He renders it *joint-creator*, or *creator of all*.

The evil principle everlasting as truly as Ahura.

Various representations concerning Ahura.

not omnipresent, nor omnipotent. He is not creator of all things; for the Evil Principle, residing in primeval darkness, is from everlasting as truly as Ahura himself. There is an inconsistency in the statements regarding Ahura's relation to the Amesha-spentas (literally, *holy immortals*), who are a kind of archangels. They are said to be seven; but this number is made up only by including Ahura Mazda as one of them,—while yet, in many passages, he is said to have created them. Ahura is represented as praying for help even to such inferior divinities as Mithra, Anâhit, Tistriya, and Vâyû, who preside respectively over the sun (see *infra*), the waters, the star Sirius, and the wind. Again, Ahura is repeatedly called “the greatest of the *yazatas*,”—a name generally given to divinities of the second class. There is also considerable confusion in the statements regarding his relation to Spenta Mainyu, the good or beneficent spirit. Ahura is frequently identified with the latter; but in many places a kind of distinction is preserved. Dr. Haug represents the Gâthas—which inculcate, as he maintains, the original Zoroastrian faith—as asserting that from the beginning there was a pair of beings—twins—in Ahura Mazda; one of whom was the good spirit, and the other the evil spirit.¹

¹ They are the two moving causes in the universe, united from the beginning, and therefore called twins. They are present everywhere; in Ahura Mazda as well as in men.—*Haug's Essays*, p. 303.

This seems to involve the tremendous consequence that evil is an essential attribute of the self-existent deity—a tenet with which we are reluctant to charge the Avesta. The view of Haug—that the two opposed spirits are *in* Ahura Mazda,—seems scarcely borne out by the original text; and even if it were, we must not press too far the logical result of certain phrases. The Avesta in truth contains no reasoned-out system; but its whole teaching asserts that to the nature of God evil is abhorrent. The Avesta has, indeed, a very imperfect conception of what sin and evil are; but, so far as its knowledge goes, it denounces and detests them.

No reasoned-out system in the Avesta.

Closely connected with Ahura is a hierarchy of celestial beings, the Amesha-spentas,¹ mentioned above. They are very generally adored along with Ahura. Thus: “We sacrifice to Ahura Mazda, bright and glorious; we sacrifice to the Amesha-spentas, all-ruling, all-beneficent.”² The function of these “holy immortals” is to inspect and aid the whole of the good creation. Their designations are as follows:—

The Amesha-spentas, or celestial hierarchy.

The designations of the holy immortals.

1. Vohumano (literally, *good mind*). The name

¹ The term Amesha-spentas was in later times corrupted into Amshaspands; and the names now usually assigned them are as follows:—Bahman, Ardibahisht, Shahrvâr, Spendermad, Khordâd, and Amerdâd. None of these names has any resemblance to the Hebrew name of any angel or archangel.

² Haptân Yasht 6.

The genius
of truth.

originally denotes submission to the revealed law. He became the genius of truth, and also of flocks.

Truth and
holiness.

2. Asha vasistha (*the best rectitude*) denotes conformity to divine order; truth and holiness. He presides over fire. He also cures diseases.

Supreme
sovereignty.

3. Khshathra vairya (*supreme sovereignty*). He represents royal dominion. He presides over metals.

The genius
of the earth.

4. Spenta Armaiti (*holy wisdom*). She became the genius of the earth.

Health and
immortality.

5, 6. Haurvatât and Ameretât are generally mentioned together. Their names signify *health* and *immortality*. They denote the fulness of blessing.

The
Amesha-
spentas in
the Gâthas.

In the Gâthas, the Amesha-spentas seem abstract ideas, or qualities, rather than personal beings. Their names sound like attributes of Ahura Mazda; and many passages appear to require them to be so understood. In others they are represented as his gifts bestowed on faithful worshippers. If not attributes, their relation to Ahura Mazda is such that we are almost compelled to conclude either that they were simply repetitions of him—seven being a kind of sacred number among the Aryans, as well as various other races,—or that there were seven original separate divinities, of whom Ahura was chief. In any case, the distinction between Ahura and the Amesha-spentas became clearer as time went on. They latterly formed a kind of celestial council.

Yazatas. This term means *worthy of worship*, and is occasionally used in that comprehensive sense. More frequently, however, it denotes a very large class of beings who are inferior in point of dignity to the Amesha-spentas. Very many of them resemble divinities of the Vedas; but others have no counterparts in the Indian system.

The Yazatas, or inferior celestial beings.

Of the first kind are genii presiding over natural objects, especially those connected with the four elements—fire and light, air, earth, and water. Very great importance is attached to Fire (Âtar); so much so that the Persians have often been called *par excellence* fire-worshippers. Atar is the son of Ahura Mazda;¹ he is the beneficent, the warrior; he is a full source of glory, a full source of healing. He is a most potent opponent of the evil principle.² He is most quick and powerful in helping those that bring him dry wood, well cleansed, and well examined in the light of day.³ The fire is never to be allowed to go out. Its altar must be kept pure; it is a heinous sin to pollute the sacred element in any way whatever.

Great importance attached to Fire.

Characteristics of Atar (fire).

Airyaman is also a genius of fire. He is the much-desired. The prayer addressed to him is called the mightiest of spells: the most healing of all cures for disease. Every form of evil flees before it.

Airyaman a genius of fire.

Sirozah i. and ii. 9. ² Farvardin Yasht xxii. 77, 78.

³ Atash Nyâyish 16.

Great
importance
also attached
to Light.
Mithra.

Functions
and attri-
butes of
Mithra.

Equal importance is attached to the genii connected with Light. A very high place among these is assigned to Mithra. He is originally the god of the luminous heaven. As such he knows everything; having a thousand ears and ten thousand eyes. He is strong, sleepless, ever watching. He is the lord of wide pastures. He swings in his hands a club with a hundred knots, the strongest of all weapons. With arms uplifted he drives in a beautiful chariot of gold, which is drawn on one wheel by four swift horses, living on heavenly food, and deathless, whose forefeet are shod with gold, and their hind feet with silver. He is the strongest, the most valiant, the most active, the most fiend-smiting of all gods. He precedes the undying, swift-horsed sun; which, in later days, came to be identified with him. The praises heaped upon Mithra make him almost equal to Ahura Mazda, with whom he is especially associated, — “May Mithra and Ahura, the high gods, come to our help!”¹ It was towards the Christian era that the worship of Mithra, mixed apparently with cruel rites borrowed from Babylon, spread far and wide in the west.

Spread of
the worship
of Mithra.

Tistriya.

Another exalted being is Tistriya, the genius of the star Sirius. He presides over the first month of summer. He is the great leader of the fixed stars in their contest with the planets; for, sin-

¹ Mihir Yasht 113.

gularly enough, these two classes of beings are opposed to each other in the great strife between good and evil. Tistriya is the chief author of rain; he is the chief opponent of Apaosha, the fiend who causes drought. Tistriya, in the shape of a beautiful white horse with golden ears and harness, meets the fiend in the shape of a black horse, black with black ears, black with a black back, black with a black tail, stamped with brands causing terror. They meet, hoof against hoof, and fight for three days and three nights. Tistriya is beaten and flees. He loudly complains that men do not sacrifice to him as they do to other *yazatas*; otherwise, he would have had the strength of ten horses, ten camels, ten bulls, ten mountains, and ten rivers. Ahura Mazda comes to his aid by offering him a sacrifice. He returns and vanquishes the fiend; and then come wind and cloud and rain and sleet, and the seven continents of the world are soon refreshed by "the friendly showers, the fertilizing waters."¹ Ahura Mazda says of "the bright and glorious Tistriya," "I have created him as worthy of sacrifice, prayer, propitiation, and glorification as myself, Ahura Mazda."

A leader in the strife between good and evil.

Conflict with Apaosha.

His defeat.

His rescue.

Ahura Mazda's testimony concerning him.

Of the genii of the waters the most celebrated is Ardi sura Anâhit, *i.e.*, the high, powerful, undefiled. She descends from the region of the stars. She is

Genii of the waters. Anâhit.

¹ Tir Yasht 20-33.

What she
does.

wide-spreading, health-giving, herd-increasing, fold-increasing. She guards living beings, as a shepherd does his flock. She has a thousand reservoirs and a thousand channels, each as large as a man could ride across in forty days, mounted on a good horse. Ahura Mazda created for her four horses—wind, rain, cloud, and sleet—so that it is continually blowing, raining, hailing, or snowing on earth. She has a golden necklace on her beautiful neck, and golden rings in her ears. The description of the goddess is very graphic; and it has been suggested that it must have been drawn from the inspection of a statue raised in her honour. This is possible, as Artaxerxes Mnemon erected statues to her, and is said to have introduced her worship among the Persians.¹ She seems to have become identified with the Babylonian goddess Mylitta, whose attributes were ascribed to the genius of the waters; although originally the latter was very unlike in character to the immoral “queen of heaven.”

Description
of her.

Vegetable
world.
Homa.

Of the productions of the vegetable world the most celebrated was Homa, or Haomo. The Homa is a plant with thick stalks and yellow flowers, growing chiefly on the mountains of Ghilan in northern Persia. The Avesta speaks of it in the most exalted terms. It flourishes in resplendent

How the
Avesta
speaks of it.

¹ It existed, however, before his time, for Herodotus mentions it.

glory on "the highest height" of the heavenly mountain Hara Berezaiti; ¹ its juice cures all ills of mind and body. The juice is extracted by pounding the plant with a pestle in a mortar. It is the enlivening, the beautiful, the lordly, the golden-eyed, ² the victorious, ³ and the giver of victory. It is the most precious part of the offering. Later Parsiism—though not the Avesta—speaks of two Homas,—a terrestrial one which is yellow, and a celestial one which is pure white.

Effects of
its juice.

This exaltation of Homa in the Avesta reminds us of the position assigned in the Veda to Soma. (The two words are the same, with the usual dialectic difference.) Soma, among the Hindus, became a still mightier deity than Homa, being sometimes called the creator of heaven and earth.

The spirits of the air are not of much importance. The most important is Vâyu—the wind; who is said to belong in part to the good, and in part to the bad, creation. The reason of this distinction is obvious; but it is remarkable that the same division is not made in the case of fire and water.

Genii of the
air,

Of the spirits of the earth the most important is Spenta Armaiti, who is also one of the Amesha spentas.

and of the
earth

¹ Gosh Yasht, 17.

² Ashi Yasht 37.

³ Bahram Yasht 57.

Divinities
not known to
the Hindus.

The beings hitherto mentioned, with the exception of Anâhit, were originally common to the Indo-Iranian race. There are other divinities who are of purely Iranian origin, and unknown in India. The most important of these are the following.

Sraosha the
genius of
obedience.

Sraosha. This name is derived from a verb signifying *to hear*. Sraosha is the genius of obedience to the law. He is a mighty-speared and lordly divinity; tall in form, fiend-smiting, the best protector of the poor, guarding the faithful like a shepherd's dog. Like Mithra, he never sleeps; he watches all the world with club uplifted, from the hour when the sun is down; indeed, since "the two spirits made the world" he has never slept; night and day he battles with the demons. His strong arm smites, and their skulls are shattered by the blow.

The holy
formulæ.

The Law (daena) and the holy formulæ or spells are also worshipped as divine. So are the sacred books, especially the Gâthas. Sacrifice is offered to them, and they are frequently invoked for aid.

Ashi Vanguhi (*good piety*) is highly celebrated. She is beautiful; her rays are far-piercing; she brings all earthly blessings. Splendid garments, and hoards of silver and gold brought from distant lands are the portion of her votaries.

The
Fravashis—
a remark-
able class of
beings.

A very remarkable class of divinities is that of the Fravashis. There is considerable obscurity—**not**

to say contradiction—in the descriptions of them. Originally they probably were the souls of the dead; but, in process of time, all living beings—animals, as well as men—sky, waters, earth, fire, and plants, were believed to have each a fravashi. Beings yet unborn possess them. Even Ahura Mazda has a fravashi. The fravashi seems sometimes a kind of guardian angel; sometimes it nearly corresponds with the archetypal ideas of the Platonic philosophy. It is quite possible that the original conception of the fravashi was modified in later times by Babylonian ideas. “The awful fravashis of the faithful” are irresistible, overpowering. Ahura Mazda confesses that they bring him assistance; indeed, it is through their brightness and glory that he maintains the sky and the life-giving waters; and had not the fravashis of the faithful helped him, the whole material world would have fallen under the power of the demons.

What they were and came to include.

Space is also worshipped.¹ So is Time. There are both “the sovereign time of the long period,” and “time without bounds.” Space and Time are not personified; they have no genius specially connected with them. The position held by “boundless Time” has led to some controversy. A text which means “*in* boundless Time”² had been rendered by Anquetil “*by* boundless Time”; and on this mainly was founded the belief that

Space and Time.

¹ Larger Sirozah 30, 21.

² Vand. xix. 9.

infinite Time was the supreme divinity of the Avesta.¹ Undoubtedly an influential sect of Zoroastrians—the Zarvanites—held this doctrine in the time of the Sasanian kings; and indeed it had been known from before the Christian era. Still, it is certainly not the doctrine of the Avesta proper; it is a later refinement introduced by speculative minds.

The whole of the good creation is worshipped.

It seems needless to go into greater detail. Suffice it to say that there is nothing in the whole of the good creation that is not held to be deserving of worship. Prayers are addressed to human souls, the souls of animals, vegetables, springs of water, rivers, mountains, the earth, the wind, the sky, the stars, etc., etc. In the case of those objects that have a presiding divinity, it must be carefully noted that the homage is rendered *both* to the divinity and the outward object. It is often difficult to say which is intended; in fact, the mind of the worshipper oscillates between them, and frequently blends, not to say confounds, the two. But so it was in Greece and Rome,—the river and the river-god were the same, yet different;—and so it is among the Hindus. The question as to the real object of the invocation is less difficult when an abstract conception—a quality or a feeling—is exalted to divinity. In such cases the abstract idea is personalized and worshipped. In other

Worship of abstract ideas.

¹ So Gibbon, and many more.

words, the being who presides over, or inspires, the feeling, is the object addressed; there are not two objects. Even so the Greeks and Romans worshipped the goddess of love, the goddess of wisdom, the god of war, and so on. The only peculiarity lies in the great extent to which the Zoroastrian carries the personifications and deifications.

We may quote the following prayer, offered on the last day of each month, as giving a good idea of the remarkable manner in which different objects of worship are thrown together in the invocations.

Specimen of prayers.

30th day. (*Dedicated to Aneran (i.e. Anaghra, or Infinite Light.)*)

We sacrifice to the eternal and sovereign luminous space. We sacrifice to the bright Garônmana [heaven]. We sacrifice to the sovereign place of eternal weal. We sacrifice to the Chinvat bridge, made by Mazda. We sacrifice to Apâm Napât, the swift-horsed, the high and shining lord, who has many wives. We sacrifice to the water made by Mazda and holy. We sacrifice to the golden and tall Homa. We sacrifice to the enlivening Homa, who makes the world grow. We sacrifice to Homa, who keeps death far away. We sacrifice to the pious and good Blessing. We sacrifice to the awful, powerful, cursing thought of the wise, a god. We sacrifice to all the holy gods of the heavenly world. We sacrifice to all the holy gods of the material world. I praise, I invoke, I meditate on, and we sacrifice to, the good, strong, beneficent Fravashis of the holy ones.

We proceed now to speak of evil beings. The Avesta, as Professor Darmesteter rather sarcastically remarks, is "very rich in demons." Daevas, drujas, yâtus, pairikas, dvarants, dregvants, and

Evil beings

so on ; we have them of varied classes, and in numbers without number.¹

The chief
evil being,
Angro
Mainyus
(Ahriman),
the hurtful
spirit.

The chief of these—and the creator of all of them—is Angro mainyus or Ahriman. His name in Zend means *hurtful spirit*. He is from all eternity ; he is wholly evil ; his original dwelling was in primeval, uncreated darkness, which existed in boundless space, far apart from the primeval, uncreated light. Angro mainyus was at first ignorant of the productions, and apparently of the existence, of the good spirit ; but when he became aware of these, he “broke into the fair creation,”² determined to counterwork, and if possible destroy, it. For

¹ The dualism of the Avesta has sometimes been called the product of philosophic thought. But the Medo-Persian, while strong in action, was in speculation weak. And dualism exists among some very simple races ; for example, the Santals of India. These hold the sun-god to be good. All other super-human beings are malevolent ; and every calamity comes from the demons. Even so, the Zoroastrian ascribed all evil to the demons. Demons were therefore multiplied ; for he had many evils to contend with. Unlike the Hindus in their progress down the rich Gangetic valley, he had to maintain a perpetual struggle for existence. Cold blasts from the Caspian and the Elburz mountains chilled his blood and killed his crops ; in summer he suffered from drought ; and he was perpetually in danger from the incursions of savage nomades. All such misfortunes were, he believed, the work of devils. Then, as the conception of the moral character of Ahura Mazda was developed, the conception of his adversary, Ahriman, was developed proportionally ; the brighter light caused a darker shadow. Dualism thus sprung from no profound speculation. A higher idea of Divine power or a deeper insight into the moral government of the world would have checked its growth.

² Farvardin Yasht 77.

every pure being created by the good spirit, Angro mainyus created a corresponding evil being; in place of health, he made disease;¹ and for life, death. The good spirit (we have seen) is surrounded by six immortal holy ones. Angro mainyus created six arch-demons, the grisly council of hell, whose very names seem mockeries of those of the pure hierarchy of heaven. The entire struggle between good and evil—light and darkness—lasts for twelve thousand years; and we are now in the thick of the fight. All creation is divided, and ranged in two hostile camps. Angels, men, animals, plants, and inanimate nature are so. Even the heavenly bodies are divided: the fixed stars are on the side of the right, while the planets are with the evil one. It is not easy (as we have said above) to see why this distinction between stars and planets is made; but, for the sake of symmetry, some division of the heavenly bodies was required. The side assigned to animals is often no less surprising; thus, frogs, turtles, cats, and even ants are partizans of the demon. But the world-wide contest is not to endure for ever. Zoroaster was created by Ahura Mazda to oppose the great enemy and all his auxiliary hosts. Zoroaster was the only being that could daunt Angro mainyus.² He smote the fiend with the

His council.

The great struggle between good and evil lasts twelve thousand years.

Not to endure for ever.

¹ He created 99,999 diseases. A favourite number in the Avesta.

² *Ashi Yasht* 20.

Its final
issue.

holy spells, and especially with the one called Ahuna vairya (or Honover), which was as strong a weapon as a stone of the size of a house. Still, however, the battle raged. Three sons of Zoroaster will yet be miraculously born,¹ who will carry on his work, in which the last of them—Soshyant, or Sosiosh—will be completely victorious. Angromainyus will be overthrown; he will be cast into hell, and (as is generally held) destroyed. Then comes the *frasho-kereti*, the perpetuation of life. The fair creation that had been slain by the fiend revives; the good live in a renovated world; and everlasting joy prevails.

The battle
field.

The Avesta does not explain how the good spirit left the region of uncreated light, and the bad spirit that of uncreated darkness. Both of these regions are finite in extent, existing in infinite space; and the battle-field lies between them.

Heaven.

Garonmâna is often mentioned as the dwelling-place of Ahura Mazda. The name means "the house of song." Ahura there sits on a throne of gold, surrounded by the Amesha spentas and Yazatas. Paradise is often identified with it.

Hell.

Hell is full of darkness and horror. It is situated

¹ We might explain how; but our readers would not pardon us if we did. The whole representation is outrageously extravagant. Yet the Avesta stands committed to the worst part of it. See Yasht xiii. 62.

in the north, under the earth ; its mouth is beside the mountain Arezura. In heaven the good are fed with butter made in spring ; in hell the wicked eat poison, and have to endure a poisonous stench. It would seem that the good man at death is conducted to Garonmâna, the heaven of Ahura ; but that (as has just been said) the earth after its renovation becomes his dwelling-place.

The food of heaven and hell.

II. THE RITUAL.

THE following remarks may suffice as a statement of the chief ritual observances of the Parsis. We shall speak in succession of their care of the sacred fire, their prayers, offerings, and purifications.

The fire is kept in a special building called Âtash Bahram ; in the innermost, and most sacred division of the building. This is separated from the rest by a wall ; but the door remains open. The fire is kept burning day and night ; it would be regarded as an awful calamity if it were to be extinguished. It is constantly watched by two priests. The fire is on a stone altar, and is within an urn, which is occasionally of silver, but generally of bronze. The urn may be of any size ; Anquetil saw one which was three feet and a half in height. The fire is large, and the flames rise high. It is fed chiefly with sandal wood. No

The sacred fire.

It is fed with sandal wood chiefly

Other fuel.

moist or green wood can be used. The priest has a pair of tongs about one foot and a half in length, with which he supplies large pieces of wood as required. Incense of gum benzoin is also burnt along with the sandal wood; and for this a large spoon is used. There is a room in the building for storing sandal wood, quantities of which are brought by worshippers; and this the priests cut up into suitable pieces. Everything issuing from the mouth defiles; hence the lower part of the face of the priest is covered with a veil of muslin, to prevent his breath reaching the sacred element.

Prayer, how offered in public.

Prayers are chaunted *memoriter* by the priest (Mobed), in front of the fire. Every portion of the day has its allotted prayer. While these are offered within the inner apartment, the people without read or repeat prayers, facing the fire. These are in Zend, in the Gujarâtî character; they are pronounced generally without being understood. Every man prays by himself; there is no common worship. Sometimes the worshipper may add an extempore supplication of his own in the vernacular. Women occasionally attend.

While praying, the priest holds in his left hand the *barsom* (beresma). This originally was a bundle of small twigs, generally of date or pomegranate, bound tightly together with a small twig. It is now generally composed of small silver rods.

The priest sits with his legs crossed, when repeating the prayers, holding the barsom in his left hand. Prayers for the dead are recited daily in the Atesh Bahram. Richer people generally have the service performed in their own houses; but poor people come to the fire-temple. The Mobed performs this service in the forenoon, chaunting a particular kind of prayer called Afrigan. It is especially during the recitation of these prayers that the *barsom* is now used.

So much for public worship; but even the domestic fire is always sacred, and must be treated as such. It, too, must never be extinguished. In the first part of the night, in the second, and the third, "Fire calls for help to the master of the house: 'Up! put on thy girdle over thy clothes, wash thy hands, take wood, bring it to me, and let me burn bright.'"¹ This threefold call must be obeyed. Now-a-days the Parsis usually cover the fire with ashes at night, to prevent its going out; and in the morning the first food it gets must be sandal wood. The mistress of the house attends to this duty. A handful of sandal wood is put on the fire by each member of the family.

The domestic fire is also sacred.

We may next speak of offerings. When asked how the demon could be repelled by him, Zoroaster said: "The sacred mortar, the sacred cup,

Offerings—
how made.

Sacred
implements

¹ Vandidad xviii. 18-22.

the Homa, and the words taught by Mazda; these are my weapons, my best weapons.”¹ All these things occupy an important place in connexion with offerings.

The sacred mortar.

The mortar (*hâvana*) is of metal, as is also the pestle. In it are pounded small twigs of the Homa plant, which was referred to above (p. 20). Water is added to the sap which is expressed, and the mixture when filtered is collected in a “sacred cup.” When the due prayers have accompanied the process of preparation, this liquid becomes endowed with almost divine attributes.

The sacred cup.

The Soma of the Hindus was fermented and intoxicating; and no doubt it was the great exhilaration produced by the beverage that led a simple-minded people to ascribe to it such transcendent attributes and powers. The Avesta supplies no evidence of the Iranians confounding intoxication with a divine afflatus.² So far well; only, no explanation then remains of the boundless and endless laudation of Homa. The Magi seem never to have asked themselves why tasting the least drop of this disagreeable drink should destroy a thousand devils.³

The great Iranian heroes of the ancient times

¹ Vandidad xix. 9.

² *Abura Mazda* is described as “never intoxicated” (Vand. xix. 20). To Indra, on the contrary, the Veda says: “Thy inebriety is intense.”

³ *Yasna* x. 14 (De Harlez, p. 287).

offered up animal sacrifices. Thus Thraetono offered up to Ashi Vanguhi a sacrifice of a hundred male horses, a thousand oxen, and ten thousand lambs.¹ The practice of animal sacrifice was continued to a late period; for Xerxes sacrificed at the site of Troy, "a thousand oxen, while the Magi poured out libations in honour of the ancient heroes."² Animal sacrifices are not unknown in the Vandidad. Thus, for a certain very grave offence the guilty person must "slay a thousand head of small cattle, and offer the entrails to the fire."³ In other cases also animal offerings were required, until in comparatively recent times; but all such observances seem now to have entirely ceased.

Animal sacrifice was offered in ancient days.

Not so now

But the normal offering was different. It was presented by Ahura Mazda himself to Anâhita, "with homa and flesh, the baresma, the wisdom of the tongue, the deeds, the libations, and the rightly spoken words."⁴ (The wisdom of the tongue means, no doubt, the sacred formulæ.)

The normal offering

In the present day, however, the flesh (*myazda*) has ceased to be offered. The priest takes the cup containing the Homa in his right hand, raises it in his right hand before the sacred fire, and drinks a small quantity. The rest is poured into a well.

¹ Aban Yasht 33.

² Herodotus vii. 43. So also the Magi "propitiated the river Strymon by sacrificing white horses to it."—Herod. vii. 113.

³ Vand. xviii. 70.

⁴ Aban Yasht 17.

The Homa offering is made in private houses as well as in fire-temples; and the ceremony should be performed twice a day. The other offerings are chiefly bread, flowers, fruits,—especially dates and pomegranates—leaves, mainly those of pomegranates, branches of homa, and less frequently fresh milk.

Offerings are still made to the sea, consisting chiefly of flowers and fruits, such as cocoa nuts. On one remarkable occasion in Bombay there was an offering of thirty (if it was not three hundred) tubs of sugar candy.

Purification from ceremonial defilement is of supreme importance.

Ceremonial purity is with the Parsi a matter of supreme importance. Defilement is easily incurred, and hence the means of purification are earnestly prescribed in the Avesta. The glory of the Zoroastrian law is said to consist in its so fully and clearly declaring the ceremonies needful for cleansing the defiled.

The distinction between ceremonial and moral defilement is far from clear in the Avesta. The one is regarded as equally dreadful with the other, and as requiring equal expiation. Nay, the Avesta would regard the crime of murder as less heinous than that of a single man carrying a dead body to the sepulchre.

Means of purification.

The great material agents of purification are water and *gomez*, or *nirang* (*urina bovis*). But the efficacy of these agents depends on their right pre-

paration and application. Should the requisite ceremonies and prayers have been neglected, the potency of the means is gone; and then, as Anquetil puts it, there is "no purification, no purifier, no priest, and no Parsi!"

Everything that issues from the human body is regarded as dead, and as belonging to the demons. Even the hair and nails when cut off are the same; and elaborate prescriptions are given as to their disposal. If these rites are neglected, and the hair and nails allowed to fall about as they may, the power of the demons is increased as much as if a sacrifice were offered them. Holes must therefore be dug, far away from fire, water, and the barsom, and the nails and hair must be deposited separately in these; three, six, or nine furrows must be drawn around the holes with a knife, and certain prayers must be offered. When all this is rightly performed, a certain bird eats up the nails (it does not seem that the bird does the same to the hair); otherwise they would have become so many spears, knives, bows, arrows, and sling-stones in the hands of the demons. It is right to mention, however, that these ceremonies are often neglected by modern Parsis, at least in India.

Disposal of
hair and
nails.

The great source of defilement is contact with a dead body.¹ In death is the chief triumph of the

Defilement
from contact
with a dead
body.

¹ "It grieves the sun, O holy Zoroaster, to shine upon a man defiled by the dead; it grieves the moon; it grieves the stars."

demon. Hence the dread of death, which is sufficiently marked among the Hindus, becomes still more intense among the Parsis. The moment the breath is out, the fiend (Druj) Nasu rushes upon it from the regions of the north, in the shape of a raging fly. The body is now utterly unclean, and pollutes every one near it. But the demon can be expelled by bringing in "a dog with four eyes"—a white dog, according to modern usage,—and the Druj, as soon as the dog looks at the body, flies back to hell.¹

How, in such cases, the demon is expelled.

From the living who have been polluted by contact with the dead, the Druj is expelled by the application of consecrated water and *nirang*,—in some cases by using only one of these. By a most complex form of ceremonies the demon is driven from post to post—all down from the top of the head to the point of the toes; and when the prescribed prayers accompany all this, the triumph is complete, and the baffled fiend flies back to the regions of the north "in the shape of a raging fly, with knees and tail sticking out, all stained with stains, and

(Vand. ix. 41). Or as Professor De Harlez renders it: "It is with regret the sun shines on the impure; it is in spite of themselves that the moon and stars give him light."

¹ Vandidad xvii. 9, 10. Darmesteter holds the text to be genuine which declares the corpse to be in the power of the *druj* (demon) until the dog has seen it or "eaten it up, or until flesh-eating birds have flown to it" (Vand. vii. 3). We have the same thing distinctly mentioned of the dog in Vand. viii. 3.

like in appearance to the foulest monsters.”¹ About thirty parts of the body are mentioned, from which the demon has to be successively expelled; it is a terribly long battle, but it ends in certain victory.

The greatest of all the purifications is the Barashnûm, a ceremony which lasts for nine nights. (The signification of the name is not fully ascertained.) Originally the rite was used only as a means of removing the defilement arising from contact with a corpse of a dog or a man. But it has long been used to cleanse away defilement in other cases. Nine holes have to be dug in a space cleared from trees; a furrow has to be drawn round each with a metal knife, and other furrows up to the number of twelve; three holes hold water, six hold *nirang*; prayers are recited; the unclean person is sprinkled with *nirang* from a spoon of brass or lead; the hands are then washed first, otherwise everything goes wrong; then the various parts of the body are sprinkled, as mentioned in last paragraph, until finally the demon, whose power has been becoming weaker at each sprinkling, is completely beaten off and driven away to hell.

The new-born child must be washed with water,—not generally now with *nirang*; before this, it is impure. Before the age of fifteen, and generally between nine and eleven, initiation into the Zoroastrian faith takes place by means of prayers, purifications,

The chief purification — the Barashnum

Initiation into Zoroastrianism how performed.

¹ Vandidad viii. 71.

and the putting on of the *kusti*¹ (a string made of seventy-two woollen threads twisted together), and the *sadarah* or sacred shirt, which is of muslin with short sleeves. If after the age of fifteen any one walks four steps without these accoutrements, the demons wither him up, and he himself becomes a hobgoblin. All of this applies equally to men and women. Except during ablutions, the *kusti* and *sadarah* must be worn day and night.

A spiritual teacher should be provided for the young Parsi.

Morning
purification.

Every morning fresh *nirang* is brought to the house. The hands are dipped into it; then a small quantity is applied to the face, hands, and feet. But in greater purifications the liquid is drunk; three sips are taken. Then (probably to banish the taste) pomegranate leaves are chewed,—though this seems no part of the prescribed ritual.

Treatment
of the dead.

When any one dies, men first wash the body, dress it in white garments, and lay it on a stone slab in the front room. The priest comes and reads prayers. The women are in the same room with the body, the men outside. During the last prayer a white dog, kept usually in the fire-temple, is brought near the corpse, and induced, if possible, to look at it. Two, now generally four, men lay the body on an iron bier. The dog is commonly

¹ The threads of the *kusti* can be spun only by the wives of the Mobeds.

brought in twice; and the whole ceremony may occupy forty minutes. Then the body is borne off by the four men—a fifth man preceding to clear the way, so that not even the shadow of an unbeliever may fall on the corpse. The Mobeds walk two and two, generally holding a handkerchief between them. Ceremonies are performed close to the *dakhma*—or “tower of silence,” as it is usually called in English. This is a circular pit, very deep, round which is a stone pavement about seven feet wide. On this the corpses are exposed naked. The¹ face of the dead is uncovered; the birds of prey come in multitudes, and very soon the flesh is all devoured. Every morning the bones are swept down into the great receptacle—the pit.

The funeral procession.

The scene of the ceremonies.

Every day of the month is consecrated to some divinity. Besides this, the 1st, 8th, 15th, and 23rd days of the month are sacred to Ahura Mazda; from the 3rd to the 8th to the Amesha spentas. The six Gahambars are in commemoration of the six periods of creation.² The last is the most important. It lasts ten days—from 10th to 20th March—which is the end of the year. It is especially marked by ceremonies in commemoration of

Holy lays.

¹ There is something touching in the expression used regarding the dead man: “Lay him down, clothed with the light of heaven, and beholding the sun.”—Vand. vi. 41.

² See Haug's *Essays*, p. 192.

Commemoration and services for the dead. the dead. During these ten days the souls of the dead are believed to quit their dwellings in the other world, and revisit their relatives on earth.

Besides this, there are special services for the dead, performed on the day of the month on which they died.

Festivals. The New Year is a great festival.

There is a festival in honour of Mithra at the autumnal equinox.

Every new moon and full moon are festivals.

Prayers have already been frequently mentioned as connected with various rites. But there are prayers for every division of the day. There are three different *gahs* between morning and evening, of different lengths; and two *gahs* from evening to morning, each six hours long. Different prayers are appointed for each *gah*.

The three great prayers, viz. :—

There are three great prayers, the potency of which is extolled continually and in the strongest possible language. These are the Ahuna vairya, the Ashem Vohu, and the Yênhê Hâtâm.

The Ahuna vairya.

The Ahuna vairya is so called from the three initial words *Yathâ ahû vairyo*. It existed before heaven, earth, water, or fire; and it is the most effective weapon that Ahura Mazda himself can use to crush the demons. It is much to be regretted that of this very important part of the Avesta, we have at least six conflicting versions from scholars

of high name. In the midst of this perplexity, the ordinary Parsi will console himself with the reflection that the efficacy of the prayer depends entirely on the right sounds being uttered, and not at all on the sense attached to them. But we cannot be certain even of the sounds; for the commentary on the prayer given in the 19th chapter (Ha) of the Yasna must be founded on readings considerably different from those which the present MSS. contain. The translation of Haug is the following: "*As a heavenly lord is to be chosen, so is an earthly master (spiritual guide) for the sake of righteousness, to be the giver of the good thoughts, the good actions of life towards Mazda; and the dominion is for the lord (ahura) whom he has given as a protector to the poor.*" With all possible respect to the learned man who supplies this version it is surely impossible that this can be the meaning of the most potent, "most fiend-smiting" prayer in the Avesta. Professor de Harlez paraphrases it thus: "*As there exists a supreme master, perfect, so there is a master of the law established to maintain and propagate holiness; the regulator of good thoughts and of actions springing out of the order of things referring to Mazda. Sovereign power belongs to Ahura; he has constituted him (viz., the master of the law) protector (shepherd) of the poor.*" Professor Darmesteter renders the prayer as follows: "*The will of the Lord is the law of holi-*

Haug's
translation

De Harlez's
paraphrase.

Darmes-
teter's
reading.

ness. *The riches of Vohumano shall be given to him who works in the world for Mazda, and wields according to the will of Ahura the power he gave him to relieve the poor.*" The sense of the last rendering is clear; but it is not easy to see how the Professor extracts it from the present text. Finally, let it be remembered that *holiness* or *righteousness*, as used in this passage and elsewhere in the Avesta, merely means ceremonial purity.¹

The Ashem
Vohu
prayer.

The Ashem Vohu prayer, which, if not quite so potent, is used still more frequently than the Ahuna vairya, is translated by Haug as follows: "*Righteousness is the best good; a blessing it is; a blessing be to that which is righteousness towards perfect righteousness.*" Darmesteter makes it—"*Holiness is the best of all good. Well is it for that holiness which is the perfection of holiness.*"

We leave our readers to judge for themselves of the value of these much-lauded invocations,—if invocations they be. We need not add the third great "prayer"—the Yênhê Hâtâm.

Various
terms of
homage and
invocation.

The terms of homage and invocation used in the prayers are various. One frequently employed is *yazamaidê*, which Darmesteter renders literally, *we sacrifice to*. It also, however, means *we worship*,

¹ So even Haug admits. "It means what is right or meritorious in a ritualistic or materialistic sense, and does not necessarily imply holiness."—*Essays*, p. 141.

*we pray to.*¹ Other terms signify *to invoke, to praise, to glorify, to celebrate.* These words seem to be used indiscriminately; at least, no distinction can be perceived between the homage rendered to higher and to lower beings; assuredly there is **no** such difference implied as is drawn by certain theologians between *dulia* and *latría*.

But finally on this head. The prevailing conception of prayer in the Avesta is that of a spell or incantation. Sometimes, we hear of formulæ that are on no account to be communicated except to the nearest relatives. When we see how prayer is thus transformed into a species of conjuration, we cannot be surprised that the practice of magic, as the very name implies, has been so often traced back to the Magi, the followers of Zoroaster.

Prayer is a kind of incantation.

It is remarkable that prayer itself is prayed to in the Avesta. The Ahuna vairya is especially thus honoured.²

Fasting occupies so important a place in most systems of religion that its entire absence from the list of prescribed duties in the Avesta attracts the more attention. There is no trace of asceticism in the Avesta precepts or the Parsi practice. The reader will at once see how much is involved in

No asceticism allowed.

¹ De Harlez renders it, not so exactly—*we honour*

² Hormazd Yasht 22, etc.

this characteristic. Milton speaks of "spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet"; but to the Zoroastrian such language appears entirely ridiculous.¹ He holds that by good eating and drinking he keeps his body in health, and so fits himself to carry on a more vigorous warfare against the demon and all his works. Certainly, the typical Parsi is at the opposite pole of thought from the pale recluse, worn to a skeleton by abstinence and vigils; and when the bodily mortification is carried to still greater lengths, the Zoroastrian can only trace the self-denial to the influence of the demons.

Zoroastrian ideas of eating, drinking, and health.

Self-denial traced to the influence of demons.

In like manner, celibacy and monasticism can never in any way be approved by Zoroastrians.

III. THE ETHICAL AND JUDICIAL SYSTEMS.

It has been mentioned above that Ahura Mazda has no immoral attributes ascribed to him. As nothing evil can form a part of his worship, so nothing evil should be practised by his worshippers.

The Avesta frequently mentions a threefold division of human duty, viz., Good Thought, Good Word, and Good Deed.

Division of human duty.

It dwells earnestly on the importance of Truthfulness. Mithra, the divinity of Light, is especially the guardian of Truth; and "to lie to Mithra," or

¹ He who fills himself with food is filled with the good spirit much more than he who does not so.—Vand. iv. 48.

perjure oneself, is a very grievous sin. Promises and contracts must be faithfully observed. Duties and sins.

Kindness and charity to followers of the true faith are inculcated.

Theft, robbery, personal assault, and murder are all strongly reprobated.

Marriage is much encouraged. It is implied that monogamy was the general rule. Yet one extraordinary practice is recognized in the later books of the Avesta—marriage with the nearest of kin. The Parsis have naturally been slow to admit that brother was allowed to marry with sister, and even mother with son; but the testimony of ancient authors leaves little or no doubt as to the existence of such unnatural connexions.¹ Importance attached to marriage.

The practice of prostitution, adultery, sodomy, and such crimes is strongly denounced. Condemnation of certain offences.

¹ See Yasna xiii. 28. The rendering of this verse by Prof. De Harlez agrees with that of M. Hovelacque. It is as follows: "I praise marriage between relatives, pure, which is the greatest among marriages present or to come," etc. etc. Unless we are to discard the testimony of a multitude of Greek and Roman writers, marriages which we should call incestuous were pretty frequent among the Persians. It is for this reason the poet Catullus (Carmen xc. 4) exclaims against "the impious religion of the Persians" (*Persarum impia religio*). See the question carefully examined by Dr. West, *Pahlavi Texts*, Part II. Appendix p. 389, etc. Between the 6th and 9th centuries after Christ, marriages between the nearest of kin were earnestly recommended by the priests. Modern Parsis highly approve of the marriage of cousins german; but they discourage the union of those more nearly allied in blood.

The observance of magical rites is in a few cases mentioned and reprobated.

Agriculture
greatly
encouraged.

The Avesta dwells with all possible earnestness on the importance of agriculture. Its ideas on this subject are embodied in quaint, and sometimes coarse, phraseology; but it is interesting to note the anxiety of the authors of the Avesta that the people should cease to be nomadic and take to a settled life. "Whoso cultivates barley cultivates righteousness."¹

Evil
animals
must be
killed.

The putting to death of the creatures of the evil principle was a high religious duty. If the division of animals into good and bad had been less arbitrary, this might have called forth a half-approving smile; the slaughter of tigers, serpents, and other noxious creatures being surely a good thing. But when we hear of tortoises, frogs, cats, ants, etc., being proscribed, we are somewhat startled. With all the efforts of the Avesta to be exact, there seems to be no division of fishes, and no clear division of birds, into good and bad. Every creature being either of divine or demoniac origin, this omission

¹ Vand. iii. 25, 31. Dr. Haug reminds us that there are metrical lines and rhymes on this subject introduced into the usually very prosaic Vandidad. The chief metrical passage may be rendered thus :—

When the barley appears, the demons pine ;
When the barley is threshed, the demons whine ;
When the barley is ground, the demons fly ;
When the meal is prepared, the demons die.

is—on the principles of the Avesta itself—a grievous fault.

The place assigned to the dog is very notable. One entire division of the Avesta is devoted to the celebration of his excellence. The shepherd's dog and the house dog are highly lauded; but the dog of dogs is the water dog, whoever he may be.¹ The murder of such a dog is inconceivably heinous. "Sweetness and fatness will never return to the place where it has been committed, until the murderer has been smitten to death, and the holy soul of the dog has been offered a sacrifice for three days and three nights, with fire blazing, with the baresma tied, and the homa uplifted."² And the reason of all this is that out of every thousand common he-dogs and every thousand she-dogs two water-dogs are formed, one male and one female. We need not wonder, then, that the correct methods of feeding and breeding dogs are prescribed with all possible solemnity in the Avesta.

Immense importance of the dog.

Physical and ceremonial defilements are put on a level with moral offences. Contact with a dead body—especially that of a man or dog—must with all possible care be avoided. To bury, or burn, a corpse is an unpardonable crime. So is it for one man to carry a dead body.

Physical and ceremonial defilements

The punishments for offences are of various

Punishments.

¹ The otter (?) Possibly the beaver.

² Vand. xiii. 172, 167.

kinds; stripes, fines, imprisonment, and death. They are often capriciously disproportionate to the offence. We hear of five stripes with a horse-whip, and of as many as two hundred. Manslaughter is visited with ninety stripes; but the man who gives bad food to a dog receives two hundred.

Intricate
legislation
about
women

There is much intricate legislation about the uncleanness of woman in child-birth and at other times; but on this we will not dwell.

A woman in child-birth suffering from fever and thirst is not absolutely debarred from water;—but the penalty of drinking it is two hundred stripes; the reason being that she is unclean and pollutes the holy element. For killing a water-dog the penalty is ten thousand stripes.

Partial
execution
of such
legislation.

Our readers will ask with some curiosity, Was such legislation ever practically carried out? Certainly not in the earlier Persian kingdom; and probably not in all its fulness even under the Sasanian monarchs. The Vandidad supplies us with the priestly ideal of right and wrong—an ideal which we cannot conceive to have ever been completely realized.

CONCLUSION.

It is now time to give a brief statement of the impression left on the mind by the review we have taken of the general teaching of the Avesta.

There are several characteristics which entitle the Zoroastrian faith to a high place among Gentile systems of religion.

1. It ascribes no immoral attributes to the object of worship. Ahura Mazda, the supreme divinity, stands ethically much higher than the popular gods of Pagan nations generally. The Avesta, as we have seen, retains much of nature-worship; but evil qualities are never ascribed either to the physical object or the being who presides over it.

Merits of
Zoroas-
trianism.

2. The Avesta sanctions no immoral acts as a part of worship.

3. None of the prescribed forms of worship is marked by cruelty.

4. In the great contest between light and darkness, the Avesta exhorts the true worshipper not to remain passive, but to contend with all his might against the productions of the Evil Principle.

5. One remarkable characteristic of the system is the absence of image-worship.¹

6. The Avesta never despairs of the future of humanity; it affirms the final victory of good over evil.

In regard to all these points there is a striking difference between Zoroastrianism and Hinduism.

Difference
between
Zoroas-
trianism and
Hinduism.

¹ As has been mentioned above, image-worship was not wholly unknown in ancient Persia. Contact with Hindus led some of the Parsis in India into idolatry; but all the educated agreed in condemning it.

It is not easy to explain how the former system struggled successfully against that fatal gravitation downwards which made primitive Hinduism sink deeper and deeper in the mire; but the fact, at all events, is undeniable.

Other merits
of Zoro-
astrianism.

Assuredly, we have no wish to undervalue the importance of the great characteristics of Zoroastrianism that have now been mentioned; and we might point to yet other merits, such as (7) its encouragement of agriculture, (8) its inculcation of truth in thought, word, and deed, (9) the position of respect it assigns to women, and (10) the kindness towards, at least, Zoroastrians which it inculcates. Still, it must be confessed that the creed of the Avesta is greatly wanting in many essential respects. It is by no means such a faith as enlightened reason can accept or defend.

Its
deficiencies
and errors.
It contains
conflicting
systems of
thought.

1. We have seen that the Avesta contains a mixture of various systems of thought,—a quasi monotheism, dualism, and nature-worship. It has often been mentioned as a characteristic of the Bible that, although its composition extended over more than a thousand years, there is a strict unity of monotheistic belief running through it from Genesis to the Apocalypse. Such a harmony pervades no one portion of the Avesta; each great division contains conflicting elements.

Its theism
very
defective.

But (2) even in its highest representations of divinity the book is deplorably defective. A glance

at what has been said on page 13 will clearly show this. Or take the formal enumeration of the divine attributes contained in the following passage :—

HORMAZD YASHT.

Ver. 5. Zarathustra said, Reveal to me that name of thine, O Ahura Mazda, which is the greatest, the best, the fairest, the most effective, the most fiend-smiting, the best-healing, that destroys best the malice of devas and men ;

Enumeration
of divine
attributes.

6. That I may afflict all devas and men ; that I may afflict all Yatus and Pairikas ; that neither devas nor men may be able to afflict me, neither Yatus nor Pairikas.

7. Ahura Mazda answered him, “ My name is the one of whom questions are asked, O holy Zarathustra !

My second name is the giver of herds.

My third name is the strong one.

My fourth name is perfect holiness.

My fifth name is, All good things created by Mazda, the offspring of the holy principle.

My sixth name is understanding.

My seventh name is the one with understanding.

My eighth name is knowledge.

My ninth name is the one with knowledge.

My tenth name is weal.

My eleventh name is he who produces weal.

My twelfth name is Ahura (the Lord).

My thirteenth name is the most beneficent.

My fourteenth name is he in whom there is no harm.

My fifteenth name is the unconquerable.

My sixteenth name is he who makes the true account.

My seventeenth name is the all-seeing.

My eighteenth name is the healer.

My nineteenth name is the Creator.

My twentieth name is Mazda (the knowing one).

9. Worship me, O Zarathustra, by day and by night with offerings of libations well accepted. I will come to thee for help and joy ; I, Ahura Mazda. The good holy Sraosha will come to thee for help and joy. The waters, the plants, and the fravashis of the holy ones will come to thee for help and joy.

Contrast
with
Biblical
conceptions.

How little, after all, do these twenty names convey to satisfy the needs and cravings of the human soul! No idea is hinted of the fatherhood of God. How sublime and melting is that one utterance of the Bible, "God is Love," in comparison with all this laboured and labouring description of Ahura Mazda!

Zoroas-
trianism
inferior to
Sufism.

With respect to the idea of communion with God, not only does Zoroastrianism fall immeasurably below Christianity,—it is decidedly inferior even to Sufism, which is a later production of the Persian mind itself.

No worship
of God
prescribed.

3. With regard to the worship of God. There doubtless were deep meanings connected with the rite of animal sacrifice, as practised by the ancient heroes; but the Avesta does not prescribe it, and, in overlooking animal sacrifice, it certainly parted with truths both venerable and precious. Prayer in the Avesta becomes, as we have seen, very much a magical formula; the sounds of which are all-important, not the sense. No common worship is prescribed,—the worshipper prays for himself, or is prayed for by the priest. That blending of hearts and interests which is implied in the sublime invocation — *Our Father, which art in heaven*—is not known to the Avesta.

Ideas of
offerings to
the gods.

4. The idea which the Avesta has of the offerings presented to the divinities is as low as that of

the Vedas. The divinities generally need food; they are all strengthened by praise.

5. Our readers will remember that Ahura Mazda neither receives nor asks any peculiar homage. He is honoured as almost every object in the good creation is honoured. Although the Avesta never, or scarcely ever, deviates into the pantheism which confounds the Creator with the creation, yet, in so far as worship is concerned, it is chargeable with degrading the Creator to an equality with his own productions.

Degrading
ideas of
God

In this respect there is the strongest possible contrast between the Avesta and the Bible. The latter is strongly, even vehemently, monotheistic; it condemns in the sternest language everything which in any degree trenches on the high intransferable claims of Jehovah. "The Lord, whose name is jealous, is a jealous God." "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." In place of worshipping the works of God, the Bible, by a bold personification and apostrophe, demands that they shall worship God. "Praise Him, sun and moon; praise Him, all ye stars of light!" Instead of being adored, fire is itself commanded to adore (Psalm cxlviii. 3-10). It was not that the seers and poets of Israel had no eye to discern the glory of Nature; they saw it more clearly than Mede or Persian did, and they celebrated it in still loftier strains; but they knew

Contrast
between the
Avesta and
the Bible.

that the glory had no subsistence apart from Him who gave it birth, and Him they could not too exclusively or ardently adore.

Defective
idea of Sin.

6. The notion of Sin in the Avesta is exceedingly imperfect. Evil, as dwelling in the heart, is very seldom mentioned; external pollution is nearly all in all. Hence, such a piercing cry as that of the Psalmist: "Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great," is never heard. Equally unknown is the feeling, akin to rapture, which is expressed in the words of the prophet Micah: "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity?" We see no sad introspection, no wrestlings of the spirit with inward corruption, no "bitter thoughts of conscience born," no cry of self-despair like this: "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults."

No deep
idea of
expiation.

7. Coincident with this very imperfect sense of human sinfulness is the entire absence of any deep idea of expiation. The great problem of expiation, which receives so sublime a solution in the Cross, has occupied and distressed not a few who never had the light of Judaism or Christianity; but it seems hardly to have suggested itself to the writers of the Avesta. For ordinary faults they prescribe washings, purifications, or penalties; and some extraordinary crimes are pronounced unpardonable.

No idea of
Salvation in
the Avesta.

8. The idea of Salvation does not appear in the Avesta. No contrast can be more complete than

that which exists between its mode of treating sin and the Christian doctrine of the Atonement. Not a few writers who do not accept the fact of the atonement made by Jesus Christ have yet been awed by the sublimity of the conception—the conception of the Son of God becoming the Son of Man, and, by His obedience unto death, bringing sinful man to God; and nothing, surely, could set in a clearer light the essential evil of sin, and also both the divine righteousness and mercy. Even unbelievers have repeatedly confessed that the doctrine of the atonement has a strange power of stirring the deeper and better emotions of the human heart.

The sublimity of the Christian conception of atonement.

9. Again, there is not only the guilt of sin; there are the dreadful consequences of pollution, degradation, and death, entailed on the soul which is surrendered to its power. How shall the dead spirit live, and, as on eagle's wings, soar upward to a holy heaven? Alas! the Avesta knows not of the need of our "escaping the corruption that is in the world through lust," nor of our becoming "partakers of the divine nature" by the direct action of the Spirit of God in regenerating and purifying the heart of fallen man.

Defective idea of spiritual purification.

10. We have seen that the Zoroastrian idea of moral purity was never able to disengage itself from that of ceremonial purity. The Avesta is, in this respect, considerably behind some of the Hindu

Moral and ceremonial purity confounded.

writings, as well as immeasurably below the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. The explanation seems to be this: A sacerdotal caste will, if unchecked, go on multiplying ceremonies and the externals of religion, until the mind becomes wholly absorbed in what is merely ritual. So, doubtless, it would have been in ancient Judea, had not the prophetic office been established. The prophet, clothed with Divine authority, exclaimed: "Bring no more vain oblations." "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." Words of burning indignation and holy scorn recalled the people to the observance of the weightier matters of the law. But in ancient Persia the laity seem to have left religion entirely to the dictation of the priests. From the reign of Darius, the son of Hystaspes, the Magi slowly regained their power, until it was crushed by the invasion of Alexander; and under the revived empire—the Sasanian—their authority appears to have been almost uncontrolled from the very outset.

Erroneous
conception
of the
divine
government

11. The Avesta has no conception of that deep principle in the divine administration,—“Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.” Utterly incomprehensible also to the Zoroastrian would have been the solemn warning which the prophet Amos addresses to the people in the name of God: “You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for your iniquities.”

When calamity came on the people of Ahura Mazda, they believed it must be from the demon or his servants.

The Avesta thus knows nothing of the discipline of sorrow—a principle not wholly unknown to various ancient nations—which, through the influence of the Bible, pervades nearly all modern thought. “Sweet are the uses of adversity:” the principle embodied in these well-known words is recognized by nearly all who are not avowed pessimists. Most educated Parsis will, I think, accept it; but certainly they have not derived this important truth from the Avesta.

The Avesta knows nothing of the discipline of sorrow.

12. The great ideas of self-denial and self-sacrifice find no place in the Avesta.

No self-denial.

13. Many of the rites prescribed in the Avesta are exceedingly childish. Some of them are even disgusting—such as the use of *urina bovis*,—and I have therefore been compelled to pass them hurriedly over.

Many rites are childish, some are disgusting.

14. Intellectually, the Avesta is but a shallow book. Many deep questions, connected with the divine government of the world, which necessarily occur to every reflecting man,—such as those with which the patriarch Job wrestled to agony—seem never to have occupied the Zoroastrian mind.

Intellectually the Avesta is shallow.

15. There is a large amount of verse,—or else, at least, of rhythmical prose—in the Avesta. It may be that the knowledge which now exists of the

sounds of the language does not help us to catch the melody; but certainly it does not seem a captivating music. As for the ideas, they are for the most part drily prosaic. The rich imagination of the early Hindu Rishis has no counterpart in the Avesta: far less have we anything corresponding to the sublimity and seraphic glow of Isaiah and other Hebrew poets.

It contains
no history.

16. The Avesta contains no history. There are brief references in the Yashts to men and women who probably were—in some cases at least—real historic characters; but in no case have we more than a momentary glimpse of the personality. Sunny pictures of old Oriental life—such as abound in the Hebrew Scriptures—there are none. Equally wanting is all that pathos of character and situation of which the Old and New Testaments are full.

It abounds
in false
science.

17. References to the physical world are frequently made; and these, in numberless instances, are directly opposed to scientific facts.

It lacks
spiritual and
moral force.

18. But finally:—Zoroastrianism is deplorably wanting in spiritual and moral force, for this reason among others, that there is so little attractive or elevating in the character and doings of its prophet. We have mentioned that his very existence has been called in question by Orientalists of high name. But supposing him to have actually existed, the mists of time have gathered thick around him. He is a name, a voice, rather than

a man of flesh and blood. Very little can be gleaned from the Avesta regarding him. He is said to have had three wives, three sons, and three daughters; but of his joys and sorrows, his life or death, we know nothing that is fitted to touch the human heart, and awaken either admiration or love. The *Zartosht Námah*, which professes to give his history, is a modern compilation abounding in the silliest tales; and the real Zoroaster was probably a greater and better man than his modern followers have made him out to be. Tradition pretty generally holds that he died in battle, fighting by the side of his patron, King Vistâspa.

We do not know the real character of Zoroaster.

How can we compare this shadowy form with Him whose "Name is above every name?" Part of the Gâthas may possibly be the composition of Zoroaster himself, or of his earliest followers; and, if so, we should conjecture him to have been a hard-battling man, who laid little claim to inspiration, but honestly disburdened his soul of what he deemed important truth. Various passages seem to indicate a character severe and stern, but strong and earnest; a man not solicitous about ritual observances, and with ideas almost monotheistic. Well, we feel that to dwell on the difference between Zoroaster and Jesus Christ is like contrasting a little rushlight which is doing its feeble best to scatter the darkness, with the unclouded sun, throned in the height of heaven.

Indications of his character.

The
character of
Christ.

What it
teaches.

Its
perfection.

Yet this tract would be incomplete if we did not glance for a moment at the immense superiority of the New Testament over the Avesta, in having the character of Christ depicted in it. Example, it is said, is better than precept. Are then the marvellous truths and precepts, which flowed like beams of light from the lips of Jesus, exemplified in His own life? Thus, we know that one of the new commands He issued, was "love your enemies;" but did He Himself act up to that grand ideal? Hear Him, as His enemies nail Him to the cross, exclaiming—"Father! forgive them; they know not what they do;" and your answer to the question must come in tears rather than in words. If those highest of high moral attainments, self-denial and self-sacrifice for the good of others, are ever to be learned, where can we better learn them than at the cross of Christ? To say that the character of Jesus is faultless is saying little; it is gloriously complete,—it is possessed of every conceivable excellence,—it is "orb'd into a perfect star." Even those who do not believe in Christ as the Son of God must admit that, if the Divinity were to become incarnate, the result would be such a career and character as actually belonged to Jesus Christ. The poet reminds us that there are

Truths which wake,
To perish never.

Such are the truths that Jesus uttered; and even

so, there is one example which has become an imperishable part of the highest heritage of humanity, and which must shine on, like the brightness of the firmament, yea, with continually increasing glory, for ever and for ever—the example supplied by the life and death of Christ.

Now, the immense disparity between Christ and Zoroaster is dawning, we believe, on that interesting people, the Parsis of India. They have been clinging to their ancient faith from a feeling of nationality rather than of religion, from tradition more than from conviction; but immense changes are certainly at hand. Of these we cannot now speak. But we believe that, as the “Magi from the east”—who probably were Zoroastrians—hastened to lay their gold, frankincense, and myrrh, at the feet of the new-born Redeemer, so, ere long, the Parsis will in all probability be the first of eastern races, to take upon them, as a race, the easy yoke of Christ.

The difference between Christ and Zoroaster dawning on the Parsis.

EXPLANATORY AND SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES.

a. The Avesta is composed in a language usually called Zend, which is cognate with Sanskrit. The translations from the Avesta in this Tract are generally those of Darmesteter, as given in his version of the Vandidad and Yashts, forming two volumes of the *Sacred Books of the East*. In other cases Haug or De Harlez has been followed.

b. The Veda is the most ancient of the sacred books of the Hindus.

c. Irân is the general Oriental designation of Persia. The term Iranians includes the Bactrians and Medes as well as the ancient Persians.

d. Ahura Mazda is generally written Hormazd by the Parsis. The usual names of the two principles, as given in the classical writers, are Oromasdes and Arimanes.

e. In Persia the adherents of the Avesta are now reduced to a very small number. In October, 1879, they were only 8499. A few of these were in Teheran, Kashan, Shiraz, and Bushire; and in these towns they were treated fairly well. But the great body of Zoroastrians resides in Yezd and Kirman. They are greatly oppressed by the Mohammedans. They are not allowed to travel, and are forbidden to ride even on asses. The form and colour of their dress are strictly prescribed.—*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, vol. xxxvi., p. 54

f. In India, according to the census of 1881, the number of Zoroastrians was 85,397. The far greater part of these are in Western India—chiefly on the island of Bombay.

g. Some Parsis, engaged in commerce, reside temporarily in China. At least, an equal number may be found in England. Some of these are merchants; others are students—of law, medicine, or engineering.



THE HINDU RELIGION
A SKETCH AND A CONTRAST

BY

J. MURRAY MITCHELL, M.A., LL.D.

Argument of the Tract.



THE place of Hinduism—which is professed by about a hundred and ninety millions in India—among the religions of the world, and its great antiquity are pointed out.

The comparative simplicity of the system contained in the Vedas, the oldest sacred books of the Hindus, its almost entire freedom from the use of images, its gradual deterioration in the later hymns, its gradual multiplication of gods, the advance of sacerdotalism, and the increasing complexity of its religious rites are set forth.

The philosophical speculation that was carried on, the different philosophical Schools, the Buddhist reaction, its conflict with Brahmanism, its final defeat, and its influence on the victorious system are discussed.

The religious reconstruction represented by the Purânas, their theological character, the modern ritual, the introduction and rise of caste, and the treatment of women are then considered.

A contrast is drawn between the leading characteristics of Hinduism and those of Christianity, and the effect of Christian ideas on modern Hinduism is exhibited. The history of the Brahmo Somaj under Keshub Chunder Sen is given at some length.

THE HINDU RELIGION.



INTRODUCTION.



THE system of religious belief which is generally called Hinduism is, on many accounts, eminently deserving of study.

Hinduism
deserving of
study.

If we desire to trace the history of the ancient religions of the widely-extended Aryan, or Indo-European race, to which we ourselves belong, we shall find in the earlier writings of the Hindus an exhibition of it decidedly more archaic even than that which is presented in the Homeric poems. Then, the growth—the historical development—of Hinduism is not less worthy of attention than its earlier phases. It has endured for upwards of three thousand years,—no doubt undergoing very important changes, yet in many things retaining its original spirit. The progress of the system has not been lawless ; and it is exceedingly instructive to note the development, and, if possible, explain it.

Its
antiquity.

We are, then, to endeavour to study Hinduism

chronologically. Unless he does so, almost every man who tries to comprehend it is, at first, overwhelmed with a feeling of utter confusion and bewilderment. Hinduism spreads out before him as a vast river, or even what seems at first

a dark
 "Illimitable ocean, without bound,
 Without dimension, where length, breadth, and height,
 And time, and place are lost."

The
 discussion
 chrono-
 logical.

But matters begin to clear up when he begins at the beginning, and notes how one thing succeeded another. It may not be possible as yet to trace all the windings of the stream, or to show at what precise points in its long course it was joined by such and such a tributary; yet much is known regarding the mighty river which every intelligent man will find it profitable to note and understand.

The
 Christian's
 duty in
 relation to
 the subject.

The Christian ought not to rest satisfied with the vague general idea that Hinduism is a form of heathenism with which he has nothing to do, save to help in destroying it. Let him try to realize the ideas of the Hindu regarding God, and the soul, and sin, and salvation, and heaven, and hell, and the many sore trials of this mortal life. He will then certainly have a much more vivid perception of the Divine origin and transcendent importance of his own religion. Farther, he will then extend a helping hand to his Eastern brother with far more of sensibility and tenderness;

and, in proportion to the measure of his loving sympathy will doubtless be the measure of his success. A yearning heart will accomplish more than the most cogent argument.

In this Tract we confine ourselves to the laying down of great leading facts and principles; but these will be dwelt upon at sufficient length to give the reader, we trust, an accurate conception of the general character and history of Hinduism. We shall also briefly contrast the system with Christianity.

The purpose of the Tract.

The history of Hinduism may be divided into three great periods,—each embracing, in round numbers, about a thousand years.

I.

THE VEDAS.

REGARDING the earliest form of Hinduism we must draw our conceptions from the Veda, or, to speak more accurately, the four Vedas. The most important of these is the R̥ig Veda; and internal evidence proves it to be the most ancient. It contains above a thousand hymns; the earliest of which may date from about the year 1500 B.C. The Hindus, or, as they called themselves, the Âryas, had by that time entered India, and were dwelling in its north-western portion, the Panjâb. The hymns, we may say, are racy of the soil.

The most ancient writings of India.

There is no reference to the life led by the people before they crossed the Himalaya mountains, or entered by some of the passes of Afghanistan.

It would be very interesting if we could discover the pre-Vedic form of the religion. Inferentially this may, to some extent, be done by comparing the teachings of the Vedas with those contained in the books of other branches of the great Aryan family--such as the Greeks, the Romans, and above all, the Iranians (ancient Persians).

The ancient Hindus were a highly-gifted, energetic race; civilized to a considerable extent; not nomadic; chiefly shepherds and herdsmen, but also acquainted with agriculture. Commerce was not unknown; the river Indus formed a highway to the Indian Ocean, and at least the Phenicians availed themselves of it from perhaps the seventeenth century B.C., or even earlier.

The hymns
are
strongly
religious.

As soon as we begin to study the hymns of the Veda, we are struck by their strongly religious character. Tacitly assuming that the book contains the whole of the early literature of India, many writers have expressed themselves in strong terms regarding the primitive Hindus as religious above all other races. But, as we read on, we become convinced that these poems are a selection, rather than a collection, of the literature; and the conviction grows that the selection has been made by priestly hands for priestly purposes. An acute

They are a
selection.

critic has affirmed that the Vedic poems are “pre-eminently sacerdotal, and in no sense popular.”¹

Pre-eminently sacerdotal.

We can thus explain a pervading characteristic of the book which has taken most readers by surprise. There is a want of simplicity in the Veda. It is often most elaborate, artificial, over-refined,—one might even say, affected. How could these be the thoughts, or those the expressions, of the imperfectly civilized shepherds of the Panjâb? But if it be only a hymn book, with its materials arranged for liturgical purposes, the difficulty vanishes.²

We shall accordingly take it for granted that the Veda presents only the religious thought of the ancient Hindus,—and not the whole of the religious thought, but only that of a very influential portion of the race. With all the qualifications now stated, the Veda must retain a position of high importance for all who study Indian thought and life. The religious stamp which the compilers of the Veda impressed so widely and so deeply has not been obliterated in the course of thirty centuries.

Present the religious thought of the ancient Hindus.

The prevailing aspect of the religion presented in the Vedic hymns may be broadly designated as Nature-worship.

Their religion is Nature-worship.

All physical phenomena in India are invested

¹ Barth.

² Bergaigne, in his able treatise, *La Religion Védique*, insists earnestly on what he calls the “liturgical contamination of the myths.” See Vol. III. p. 320.

Physical
phenomena
in India.

with a grandeur which they do not possess in northern or even southern Europe. Sunlight, moonlight, starlight, the clouds purpled with the beam of morning, or flaming in the west like fiery chariots of heaven; to behold these things in their full magnificence one ought to see them in the East. Even so the sterner phenomena of Nature, —whirlwind and tempest, lightning and thunder, flood and storm-wave, plague, pestilence, and famine; all of these oftentimes assume in the East a character of awful majesty before which man cowers in helplessness and despair. The conceptions and feelings hence arising have from the beginning powerfully affected the religion of the Hindus. Everywhere we can trace the impress of the grander manifestations of Nature—the impress of their beneficence, their beauty, their might, their mystery, or their terribleness.

Their effect
on the
religion.

The deities
are "the
bright ones,"
according to
the language
of the sacred
books of
India.

The Sanskrit word for *god* is *deva*, which means *bright, shining*. Of physical phenomena it was especially those connected with light that enkindled feelings of reverence. The black thunder-cloud that enshrouded Nature, in which the demon had bound the life-giving waters, passed away; for the glittering thunderbolt was launched, and the streams rushed down, exulting in their freedom; and then the heaven shone out again, pure and peaceful as before. But such a wonder as the Dawn —with far-streaming radiance, returning from the

land of mystery, fresh in eternal youth, and scattering the terrors of the night before her; who could sufficiently admire? And let it be remembered that in the Hindu mind the interval between admiration and adoration is exceedingly small. Yet, while it is the Dawn which has evoked the truest poetry, she has not retained the highest place in worship.

No divinity has fuller worship paid him than Agni, the Fire (*Ignis*). More hymns are dedicated to him than to any other being. Astonishment at the properties of fire; a sense of his condescension in that he, a mighty god, resides in their dwellings; his importance as the messenger between heaven and earth, bearing the offerings aloft; his kindness at night in repelling the darkness and the demons which it hides; all these things raised Agni to an exalted place. He is fed with pure clarified butter, and so rises heavenward in his brightness. The physical conception of fire, however, adheres to him, and he never quite ceases to be the earthly flame; yet mystical conceptions thickly gather round this root-idea; he is fire pervading all Nature; and he often becomes supreme, a god of gods.

All this seems natural enough; but one is hardly prepared for the high exaltation to which Soma is raised. Soma is properly the juice of a milky plant (*asclepias acida*, or *sarcostemma viminalis*), which, when fermented, is intoxicating. The

Fire much worshipped.

Soma highly exalted.

simple-minded Âryas were both astonished and delighted at its effects : they liked it themselves ; and they knew nothing more precious to present to their gods. Accordingly, all of these rejoice in it. Indra in particular quaffs it “ like a thirsty stag ; ” and under its exhilarating effects he strides victoriously to battle. Soma itself becomes a god, and a very mighty one ; he is even the creator and father of the gods ;¹ the king of gods and men ;² all creatures are in his hand. It is surely extraordinary that the Âryas could apply such hyperbolic laudations to the liquor which they had made to trickle into the vat, and which they knew to be the juice of a plant they had cut down on the mountains and pounded in a mortar ; and that intoxication should be confounded with inspiration. Yet of such aberrations we know the human mind is perfectly capable.

Soma becomes a very mighty god.

Connection with Persian, Greek, and Roman systems.

We have first referred to Agni and Soma, as being the only divinities of highest rank which still retain their physical character. The worship paid to them was of great antiquity ; for it is also prescribed in the Persian Avesta, and must have been common to the Indo-Iranian branch of the Aryan race before the Hindus entered India. But we can inferentially go still further back, and speak of a deity common to the Greeks, Romans, Persians, and Hindus. This deity is Varuṇa ; the most

¹ R. V. ix. 42, 4.

² ix. 97, 24.

remarkable personality in the Veda. The name, which is etymologically connected with *Οὐρανός*, signifies "the encompasser," and is applied to heaven—especially the all-encompassing, extreme vault of heaven—not the nearer sky, which is the region of cloud and storm. It is in describing Varuṇa that the Veda rises to the greatest sublimity which it ever reaches. A mysterious presence, a mysterious power, a mysterious knowledge amounting almost to omniscience, are ascribed to Varuṇa. The winkings of men's eyes are numbered by him. He upholds order, both physical and moral, throughout the universe. The winds are his breath, the sun his eye, the sky his garment. He rewards the good, and punishes the wicked. Yet to the truly penitent he is merciful. It is absolutely confounding to pass from a hymn that celebrates the serene majesty and awful purity of Varuṇa to one filled with measureless laudations of Soma or Agni. Could conceptions of divinity so incongruous co-exist? That they could not spring up in the same mind, or even in the same age, is abundantly manifest. And, as we have mentioned, the loftier conceptions of divinity are unquestionably the earlier. It is vain to speak, as certain writers do, of religion gradually refining itself, as a muddy stream can run itself pure; Hinduism resembles the Ganges, which when it breaks forth from its mountain cradle at Hardwâr, is com-

Varuṇa, the god of heaven.

The sublimity of the Vedic description of him.

Contrast with the laudations of Agni and Soma.

The loftier conceptions of divinity the earlier.

paratively pellucid, but, as it rolls on, becomes more and more muddy, discoloured, and unclean.¹

Various scholars affirm that Varuṇa, in more ancient, pre-Vedic times, held a position still higher than the very high one which he still retains. This is probable; indeed it is certain that, before later divinities had intruded, he held a place of unrivalled majesty. But, in the Vedas, Indra is a more conspicuous figure. He corresponds to the Jupiter Pluvius of the Romans. In north-western India, after the burning heat, the annual return of the rains was hailed with unspeakable joy; it was like life succeeding death. The clouds that floated up from the ocean were at first thin and light; ah! a hostile demon was in them carrying off the healing waters, and not permitting them to fall; but the thunderbolt of Indra flashed; the demon was driven away howling, and the emancipated streams refreshed the thirsty earth. Varuṇa was not indeed dethroned, but he was obscured, by the achievements of the warlike Indra; and the super-sensuous, moral conceptions that were connected with the former gradually faded from

Indra.

His achievements.

¹ The religion of the Indo-European race, while still united, "recognized a supreme God; an organizing God; almighty omniscient, moral This conception was a heritage of the past The supreme God was originally the God of heaven. So Darmesteter: *Contemporary Review*, Oct., 1879. Roth had previously written with much learning and acuteness to the same effect.

the minds of the people, and Varuṇa ere long became quite a subordinate figure in the Pantheon.

The deities are generally said in the Veda to be "thrice eleven" in number. We also hear of three thousand three hundred and thirty-nine. There is no *system*, no fixed order in the hierarchy; a deity who, in one hymn, is quite subordinate, becomes in another supreme; almost every god becomes supreme in turn; in one hymn he is the son of some deity, and in another that deity's father, and so (if logic ruled) his own grandfather. Every poet exalts his favourite god, till the mind becomes utterly bewildered in tracing the relationships.

Number and relations of deities uncertain.

We have already spoken of Agni, Varuṇa, and Indra, as well as Soma. Next to these in importance may come the deities of light, viz., the Sun, the Dawn, and the two Aśvina or beams that accompany the dawn. The Winds come next. The Earth is a goddess. The Waters are goddesses. It is remarkable that the Stars are very little mentioned; and the Moon holds no distinguished place.

In the religion of the Rig Veda we hardly see fetishism—if by fetishism we mean the worship of small physical objects, such as stones, shells, plants, etc., which are believed to be charged (so to speak) with divinity; though this appears in the fourth Veda—the Atharva. But even in the Rig Veda, almost any object that is grand, beneficent, or

Hardly any fetishism in the Rig Veda.

terrible, may be adored; and implements associated with worship are themselves worshipped. Thus, the war-chariot, the plough, the furrow, etc., are prayed to.

Early
tendency
towards
pantheism.

A pantheistic conception of Nature was also present in the Indian mind from very early times, although its development was later. Even in the earliest hymns, any portion of Nature with which man is brought into close relation may be adored.¹

Reverence
of the dead.

We must on no account overlook the reverence paid to the dead. The *Pitris* (*patres*) or Fathers are frequently referred to in the Veda. They are clearly distinguished from the *devas* or gods. In later writings they are also distinguished from men, as having been created separately from them; but this idea does not appear in the Veda. Yama, the first mortal, travelled the road by which none returns, and now drinks the Soma in the innermost of heaven, surrounded by the other Fathers. These come also, along with the gods, to the banquets prepared for them on earth, and, sitting on the sacred grass, rejoice in the exhilarating draught.

The subjects
of the hymns
of the Rig
Veda.

The hymns of the Rig V. celebrate the power, exploits, or generosity of the deity invoked; and sometimes his personal beauty. The praises lavished on the god not only secured his favour, but increased his power to help the worshipper.

There is one prayer (so-called) which is esteemed pre-eminently holy; generally called—from the metre in which it is composed—the Gâyatrî.¹ It may be rendered thus:

The holiest prayer.

“Let us meditate on that excellent glory of the Divine Sun (or Vivifier); may he enlighten our understandings!”

It has always been frequently repeated in important rites.

So far we have referred almost exclusively to the Ṛig Veda. The next in importance is the Atharva, sometimes termed the Brahma Veda; which we may render the Veda of incantations. It contains six hundred and seventy hymns. Of these a few are equal to those in the Ṛig V.; but, as a whole, the Atharva is far inferior to the other in a moral and spiritual point of view. It abounds in imprecations, charms for the destruction of enemies, and so forth. Talismans, plants, or gems, are invoked, as possessed of irresistible might to kill or heal. The deities are often different from those of the Ṛig V. The Atharva manifests a great dread of malignant beings, whose wrath it deprecates. We have thus simple demon-worship. How is this great falling-off to be explained? In one of two ways. Either a considerable time intervened between the composition of the two books, during which the original faith

Atharva Veda.

Inferior morally and spiritually to the Rig Veda.

Explanation of deterioration.

¹ Rig. V. iii. 62, 10.

had rapidly degenerated, probably through contact with aboriginal races who worshipped dark and sanguinary deities; or else there had existed from the beginning two forms of the religion—the higher of which is embodied in the hymns of the *Rig V.*, and the lower in the *Atharva*. We believe the latter explanation to be correct; although doubtless the superstitions of the aborigines must all along have exerted an influence on the faith of the invaders.

The offerings

The offerings presented to the gods consisted chiefly of clarified butter, curdled milk, rice, cakes, and fermented Soma juice, which was generally mixed with water or milk. All was thrown into the fire, which bore them or their essences to the gods. The Soma was also sprinkled on the sacred grass, which was strown on the floor; and on which the gods and fathers were invited to come and seat themselves, that they might enjoy the cheering beverage. The remainder was drunk by the officiating priests. The offerings were understood to nourish and gratify the gods as corporeal beings.

Animal victims

Animal victims were also offered up. We hear of sheep, goats, bulls, cows, and buffaloes being sacrificed, and sometimes in large numbers. But the great offering was the *Aśvamedha*, or sacrifice of the horse. The body of the horse was hacked to pieces; the fragments were dressed—

part was boiled, part roasted; some of the flesh was then eaten by the persons present, and the rest was offered to the gods. Tremendous was the potency—at least as stated in later times—of a hundred such sacrifices; it rendered the offerer equal or superior to the gods;—even the mighty Indra trembled for his sovereignty, and strove to hinder the consummation of the awful rite.

Human sacrifice was not unknown; though there are very few allusions to it in the earlier hymns.

Human
sacrifice.

Even from the first, however, the rite of sacrifice occupies a very high place; and allusions to it are exceedingly frequent. The observances connected with it are said to be the “first religious rites.” Sacrifice was early believed to be expiatory; it removed sin. It was substitutionary; the victim stood in place of the offerer. All order in the universe depends upon it; it is “the nave of the world-wheel.” Sometimes Vishṇu is said to be the sacrifice; sometimes even the Supreme Being himself is so. Elaborated ideas and a complex ritual, which we could have expected to grow up only in the course of ages, appear from very early times. We seem compelled to draw the inference that sacrifice formed an essential, and very important, part of the pre-Vedic faith.¹

Sacrifice
deemed of
very high
importance

¹ The rites, says Haug, “must have existed from times immemorial.” *Aitareya Bráhmaṇa*, pp. 7, 9.

In the Veda, worship is a kind of barter. In exchange for praises and offerings, the deity is asked to bestow favours. Temporal blessings are implored, such as food, wealth, life, children, cows, horses, success in battle, the destruction of enemies, and so forth. Not much is said regarding sin, and the need of forgiveness. A distinguished scholar¹ has said that "the religious notion of sin is wanting altogether;" but this affirmation is decidedly too sweeping.

No image-worship.

The worship exemplified in the Veda is not image-worship. Images of the fire, or the winds, or the waters, could hardly be required; and, while the original Nature-worship lasted, idols must have been nearly unknown. Yet, the description of various deities is so precise and full that it seems to be probably drawn from visible representations of them. Worship was personal and domestic; not, in any way, public. Indeed, two men praying^a at the same time had to pray quite apart, so that neither might disturb the other. Each dealt with heaven, so to speak, solely on his own behalf.

No public worship.

No temples.

We hear of no places set apart as temples in Vedic times.

A Veda consists of two parts called *Mantra* or *Sanhitâ*, and *Brâhmana*. The first is composed of

¹ Weber, *History of Indian Literature*, p. 38.

hymns. The second is a statement of ritual, and is generally in prose. The existing Brâhmanas are several centuries later than the great body of the Hymns, and were probably composed when the Hindus had crossed the Indus, and were advancing along the Gangetic valley. The oldest may be about the date of 800 or 700 B.C.

The
treatises on
ritual.

The Brâhmanas are very poor, both in thought and expression. They have hardly their match in any literature for "pedantry and downright absurdity."¹ Poetical feeling, and even religious feeling, seem gone; all is dead and dry as dust. By this time the Sanskrit language had ceased to be generally understood. The original texts could hardly receive accessions; the most learned man could do little more than interpret, or perhaps misinterpret, them. The worshipper looked on; he worshipped now by proxy. Thus the priest had risen greatly in importance. He alone knew the sacred verses and the sacred rites. An error in the pronunciation of the mystic text might bring destruction on the worshipper: what could he do but lean upon the priest? The latter could say the prayers, if he could not pray. All this worked powerfully for the elevation of the Brahmans, the "men of prayer:" they steadily grew into a class, a caste; and into this no one could enter who was not of priestly descent.

Growth of
priestly
power.

¹ Max Müller, *Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, p. 389

Schools for
the study of
sacred books,
rites, and
traditions.

Schools were now found necessary for the study of the sacred books, rites, and traditions. The importance which these attach to theology—doctrine—is very small: the externals of religion are all in all. The rites, in fact, now threw the very gods into the shade; everything depended on their due performance. And thus the Hindu ritual gradually grew up into a stupendous system, the most elaborate, complex, and burdensome which the earth has seen.

Moral
character of
the Veda.

It is time, however, to give a brief estimate of the moral character of the Veda. The first thing that strikes us is its inconsistency. Some hymns—especially those addressed to Varuṇa—rise as high as Gentile conceptions regarding deity ever rose; others—even in the Rig V—sink miserably low; and in the Atharva we find, “even in the lowest depth, a lower still.”

Indra
supersedes
Varuṇa.

The character of Indra—who has displaced or overshadowed Varuṇa¹—has no high attributes. He is “voracious;” his “inebriety is most intense;” he “dances with delight in battle.” His worshippers supply him abundantly with the drink he loves; and he supports them against their foes, ninety and more of whose cities he has destroyed. We do not know that these foes, the Dasyus, were morally worse than the intrusive Âryas; but the feelings of the latter towards the former were of

¹ “The haughty Indra takes precedence of all gods.” Rig V. 1, 55.

unexampled ferocity. Here is one passage out of multitudes similar :

“Hurl thy hottest thunderbolt upon them ! Uproot them ! Cleave them asunder ! O Indra, overpower, subdue, slay the demon ! Pluck him up ! Cut him through the middle ! Crush his head !”

Indra, if provided with Soma, is always indulgent to his votaries ; he supports them *per fas et nefas*. Varuṇa, on the other hand, is grave, just, and to wicked men, severe.¹ The supersession of Varuṇa by Indra, then, is easily understood. We see the principle on which it rests stated in the Old Testament. “Ye cannot serve the Lord,” said Joshua to the elders of Israel ; “for He is a holy God.” Even so Jeremiah points sorrowfully to the fact that the Pagan nations clung to their false gods, while Israel was faithless to the true. As St. Paul expresses it : “they did not like to retain God in their knowledge.” Unless this principle is fully taken into account, we cannot understand the historical development of Hinduism.

Deterioration begins early.

The Veda frequently ascribes to the gods, to use the language of Max Müller, “sentiments and passions unworthy of deity.” In truth, except in the case of Varuṇa, there is not one divinity that is possessed of pure and elevated attributes.

Varuṇa the only divinity possessed of pure and elevated attributes.

¹ “These two personages [Indra and Varuṇa] sum up the two conceptions of divinity, between which the religious consciousness of the Vedic Aryans seems to oscillate.”—Bergaigne, *La Religion Védique*, Vol. III. p. 149.

II.

PHILOSOPHY; AND RITUALISM.

Speculation
begins.

DURING the Vedic period—certainly towards its conclusion—a tendency to speculation had begun to appear. Probably it had all along existed in the Hindu mind, but had remained latent during the stirring period when the people were engaged in incessant wars. Climate, also, must have affected the temperament of the race; and, as the Hindus steadily pressed down the valley of the Ganges into warmer regions, their love of repose and contemplative quietism would continually deepen. And when the Brahmans became a fully developed hierarchy, lavishly endowed, with no employment except the performance of religious ceremonies, their minds could avoid stagnation only by having recourse to speculative thought. Again, asceticism has a deep root in human nature; earnest souls, conscious of their own weakness, will fly from the temptations of the world. Various causes thus led numbers of men to seek a life of seclusion; they dwelt chiefly in forests, and there they revolved the everlasting problems of existence, creation, the soul, and God. The lively Greeks, for whom, with all their high intellectual endowments, a happy sensuous existence was nearly all

Rise of
asceticism.

in all, were amazed at the numbers in Northern India, who appeared weary of the world and indifferent to life itself. By and for these recluses were gradually composed the Aranyakas, or forest treatises ; and out of these grew a series of more regular works, called Upanishads.¹ At least 250 of these are known to exist. They have been called “guesses at truth ;” they are more so than formal solutions of great questions. Many of them are unintelligible rhapsodies ; others rise almost to sublimity. They frequently contradict each other ; the same writer sometimes contradicts himself. One prevailing characteristic is all-important ; their doctrine is pantheism. The pantheism is sometimes not so much a coldly reasoned system as an aspiration, a yearning, a deep-felt need of something better than the mob of gods who came in the train of Indra, and the darker deities who were still crowding in. Even in spite of the counteracting power of the Gospel, mysticism has run easily into pantheism in Europe ; and orthodox Christians sometimes slide unconsciously into it—or at least into its language.² But as has been already noted,

Upanishada

They are pantheistic

¹ The meaning of the term is not quite certain. *Sessions, or Instructions*, may perhaps be the rendering. So Monier Williams.

² For example, **Wordsworth** :

Thou, Thou alone
Art everlasting, and the blessed Spirits
Which Thou includest, as the sea her waves.

Excursion, Book IV.

a strain of pantheism existed in the Hindu mind from early times.

Accordingly, these hermit sages, these mystic dreamers, soon came to identify the human soul with God. And the chief end of man was to seek that the stream derived from God should return to its source, and ceasing to wander through the wilderness of this world, should find repose in the bosom of the illimitable deep, the One, the All. The Brahmans attached the Upanishads to the Veda proper, and they soon came to be regarded as its most sacred part. In this way the influence these treatises have exercised has been immense more than any other portion of the earlier Hindu writings, they have moulded the thoughts of succeeding generations. Philosophy had thus begun.

Six
philosophic
schools.

The speculations of which we see the commencement and progress in the Upanishads were finally developed and classified in a series of writings called the six Śâstras or *darśanas*. These constitute the regular, official philosophy of India. They are without much difficulty reducible to three leading schools of thought—the Nyâya, the Sâṅkhya, and the Vedânta.

Roundly and speaking generally, we may characterize these systems as theistic, atheistic, and pantheistic respectively.

The Nyâya.

It is doubtful, however, whether the earlier form of the Nyâya was theistic or not. The later form

is so ; but it says nothing of the moral attributes of God, nor of His government. The chief end of man, according to the Nyâya, is deliverance from pain ; and this is to be attained by cessation from all action, whether good or bad.

The Sâṅkhya declares matter to be self-existent and eternal. Soul is distinct from matter, and also eternal. When it attains true knowledge it is liberated from matter and from pain. The Sâṅkhya holds the existence of God to be without proof. The
Sâṅkhya.

But the leading philosophy of India is unquestionably the Vedânta. The name means “the end or scope of the Veda ;” and if the Upanishads were the Veda, instead of treatises tacked on to it, the name would be correct : for the Vedânta, like the Upanishads, inculcates pantheism. The
Vedânta.

The form which this philosophy ultimately assumed is well represented in the treatise called the Vedânta Sâra, or Essence of the Vedânta. A few extracts will suffice to exhibit its character. “The unity of the soul and God ; this is the scope of all Vedânta treatises.” We have frequent references made to the “great saying” *Tat twam, i.e.,* That art thou, or Thou art God ; and *Aham Brahma, i.e.,* I am God. Again it is said, “The whole universe is God.” God is “existence (or more exactly, an existent thing¹), knowledge, and joy.” Knowledge, not a knower ; joy, not one who rejoices.

¹ Or, the thing that really is—the *ὄντως ὄν*.

It teaches
absolute
idealism.

Everything else has only a seeming existence, which is in consequence of ignorance (or illusion) Ignorance makes the soul think itself different from God; and it also "projects" the appearance of an external world.

"He who knows God becomes God." "When He, the first and last is discerned, one's own acts are annihilated."

Meditation, without distinction of subject and object, is the highest form of thought. It is a high attainment to say, "I am God;" but the consummation is when thought exists without an object.

There are four states of the soul—waking, dreaming, dreamless sleep, and the "fourth state," or pure intelligence. The waking man is in dense ignorance; in sleep he is freed from part of this ignorance; in dreamless sleep he is freed from still more; but the consummation is when he attains something beyond this, which it seems cannot be explained, and is therefore called the fourth state.

Doctrine of
"the Self."

The name, which in later writings is most frequently given to the "one without a second,"¹ is *Ātman*, which properly means Self. Much is said of the way in which the self in each man is to recover, or discover, its unity with the Supreme or real self. For as the one sun shining in the heavens is reflected, often in distorted images, in

¹ *Ekamadvitiyam.*

multitudes of vessels filled with water, so the one Self is present in all human minds.¹ There is not —perhaps there could not be—consistency in the statements of the relation of the seeming to the real. In most of the older books a practical, or conventional, existence is admitted of the Self in each man, but not a real existence. But when the conception is fully formulated, the finite world is not admitted to exist, save as a mere illusion. All phenomena are a play—a play without plot or purpose, which the Absolute plays with itself.² This is surely transcendent transcendentalism. One regrets that speculation did not take one step more, and declare that the illusion was itself illusory. Then we should have gone round the circle, and returned to *sensus communis*. We must be pardoned if we seem to speak disrespectfully of such fantastic speculations; we desire rather to speak regretfully of the many generations of men which successively occupied themselves with such unprofitable dreams; for this kind of thought is traceable even from Vedic days. It is more fully developed in the Upanishads. In them occurs the classical sentence so frequently quoted in later literature, which declares that the Absolute being is the “one [thing] without a second.”³

Inconsistent statements.

¹ This illustration is in the mouth of every Hindu disputant at the present day.

² Bartn, p. 75.

³ Ekamadvityam.

The Gîtâ

The book which perhaps above all others has moulded the mind of India in more recent days is the Bhagavad Gîtâ, or Song of the Holy One. It is written in stately and harmonious verse, and has achieved the same task for Indian philosophy as Lucretius did for ancient Epicureanism.¹ It is eclectic, and succeeds, in a sort of way, in forcing the leading systems of Indian thought into seeming harmony.

Some have thought they could discern in these daring speculations indications of souls groping after God, and saddened because of the difficulty of finding Him. Were it so, all our sympathies would at once be called forth. But no; we see in these writings far more of intellectual pride than of spiritual sadness. Those ancient dreamers never learned their own ignorance. They scarcely recognized the limitations of the human mind. And when reason could take them no farther, they supplemented it by dreams and ecstasy until, in the Yoga philosophy, they rushed into systematized mysticism and magic, far more extravagant than the wildest *theurgy* of the degraded Neoplatonism of the Roman empire.

Intellectual
pride.

A learned writer thus expresses himself :

“The only one of the six schools that seems to recognize the

1

Volui tibi suaviloquenti
Carmine Pierio rationem exponere nostram
Et quasi Musæo dulci contingere melle.

doctrine of divine providence is the Yoga. It thus seems that the consistent followers of these systems can have, in their perfected state, no religion, no action, and no moral character."¹

And now to take a brief review of the whole subject. The Hindu sages were men of acute and patient thought; but their attempt to solve the problem of the Divine and human natures, of human destiny and duty, has ended in total failure. Each system baseless, and all mutually conflicting; systems cold and cheerless, that frown on love and virtuous exertion, and speak of annihilation or its equivalent, absorption, as our highest hope: such is the poor result of infinite speculation. "The world by wisdom knew not God." Oh that India would learn the much-needed lesson of humility which the experience of ages ought to teach her!

Indian philosophy a sad failure.

While speculation was thus busy, Sacerdotalism was also continually extending its influence. The Brahman, the man of prayer, had made himself indispensable in all sacred rites. He alone—as we have seen—knew the holy texts; he alone could rightly pronounce the words of awful mystery and power on which depended all weal or woe. On all religious occasions the priest must be called in, and, on all occasions, implicitly obeyed. For a considerable time the princes struggled against the encroachments of the priests; but, in the end, they were completely vanquished. Never was sacer-

Sacerdotalism.

¹ Dr. J. Muir, in *North British Review*, No. xlix. p. 224.

The tyranny
of sacer-
dotalism.

dotal tyranny more absolute; the proudest pope in mediæval times never lorded it over Western Christendom with such unrelenting rigour as the Brahmans exercised over both princes and people. The feeling of the priests is expressed in a well-known stanza :

“All the world is subject to the gods ; the gods are subject to the holy texts ; the holy texts are subject to the Brahman ; therefore the Brahman is my God.”

Yes, the sacred man could breathe the spell which made earth and hell and heaven itself to tremble. He therefore logically called himself an earthly god. Indeed, the Brahman is always logical. He draws conclusions from premises with iron rigour of reasoning ; and with side-issues he has nothing to do. He stands upon his rights. Woe to the being—god or man—who comes in conflict with him !

Ritual
becomes
extravagant.

The priests naturally multiplied religious ceremonies, and made ritual the soul of worship. Sacrifice especially assumed still more and more exaggerated forms — becoming more protracted, more expensive, more bloody. A hecatomb of victims was but a small offering. More and more awful powers were ascribed to the rite.

Reaction.

But the tension was too great, and the bow snapped. Buddhism arose. We may call this remarkable system the product of the age—an inevitable rebellion against intolerable sacerdotalism ;

and yet we must not overlook the importance of the very distinct and lofty personality of Buddha (Śākya Muni) as a power moulding it into shape.

Wherever it extended, it effected a vast re- Buddhism.
volution in Indian thought. Thus, in regard to the institution of caste, Buddha did not attack it, —he did not, it would appear, even formally renounce it; as a mere social institution, he seems to have acknowledged it; but then he held that all the *religious* were freed from its restrictions. “My law,” said he, “is a law of mercy for all;” and forthwith he proceeded to admit men of every caste into the closest fellowship with himself and his followers. Then, he preached—he, though not a Brahman—in the vernacular languages,—an immense innovation, which made his teaching popular. He put in the forefront of his system certain great fundamental principles of morality. Moral elements of this system. He made religion consist in duty, not rites. He reduced duty mainly to mercy or kindness towards all living beings — a marvellous generalization. This set aside all slaughter of animals. The mind of the princes and people was weary of priestcraft and ritualism; and the teaching of the great reformer was most timely. Accordingly his doctrine spread with great rapidity; and for a long time it seemed likely to prevail over Brahmanism. Conflict with Brahmanism. But various causes gradually combined against it. Partly, it was

Victory of
Brahman-
ism.

overwhelmed by its own luxuriance of growth; partly, Brahmanism, which had all along maintained an intellectual superiority, adopted, either from conviction or policy, most of the principles of Buddhism, and skilfully supplied some of its main deficiencies. Thus the Brahmans retained their position; and, at least nominally, their religion won the day.

III.

RECONSTRUCTION. MODERN HINDUISM.

Revival, in
an altered
form, of
Hinduism.

BUT the Hinduism that grew up, as Buddhism faded from Indian soil, was widely different from the system with which early Buddhism had contended. Hinduism, as it has been developed during the last thousand or twelve hundred years, resembles a stupendous far-extended building, or series of buildings, which is still receiving additions, while portions have crumbled and are crumbling into ruin. Every conceivable style of architecture, from that of the stately palace to the meanest hut, is comprehended in it. On a portion of the structure here or there, the eye may rest with pleasure; but, as a whole, it is an unsightly, almost monstrous, pile. Or, dismissing figures, we must describe it as the most extraordinary creation which the world has seen. A jumble of all things; polytheistic pantheism; much of Buddhism; something ap-

parently of Christianity, but terribly disfigured; a science wholly outrageous; shreds of history twisted into wild mythology; the bold poetry of the older books understood as literal prose; any local deity, any demon of the aborigines, however hideous, identified with some accredited Hindu divinity; any custom, however repugnant to common sense or common decency, accepted and explained;—in a word, later Hinduism has been omnivorous; it has partially absorbed and assimilated every system of belief, every form of worship, with which it has come in contact. Only to one or two things has it remained inflexibly true. It has steadily upheld the proudest pretensions of the Brahman; and it has never relaxed the sternest restrictions of Caste. We cannot wonder at the severe judgment pronounced on Hinduism by nearly every Western author. According to Macaulay, “all is hideous and grotesque and ignoble;” and the calmer De Tocqueville maintains that “Hinduism is perhaps the only system of belief that is worse than having no religion at all.”¹

Only the position of the Brahman and the restrictions of caste retained.

When a modern Hindu is asked what are the sacred books of his religion, he generally answers: “The Vedas, the Śâstras (*i.e.* philosophical systems), and the Purânas.” Some authorities add the Tantras.

The modern form of Hinduism is exhibited

¹ *Miscellaneous Writings* (Macmillan, 1861), Vol. I., p. 77.

chiefly in the eighteen Purânas, and an equal number of Upa-purânas (minor puranas).¹

The
Purânas

When we compare the religion embodied in the Puranas with that of Vedic times, we are startled at the magnitude of the change. The Pantheon is largely new; old deities have been superseded; other deities have taken their place. There has been both accretion from without and evolution from within. The thirty-three gods of the Vedas have been fantastically raised to three hundred and thirty millions. Śiva, Durgâ, Râma, Kṛishṇa, Kâlî—unknown in ancient days—are now mighty divinities; Indra is almost entirely overlooked; and Varuṇa has been degraded from his lofty throne, and turned into a regent of the waters.

New deities,
rites, and
customs.

The worship of the Linga (phallus) has been introduced. So has the great dogma of Transmigration; which has stamped a deeper impress on later Hindu mind than almost any other doctrine. Caste is fully established; though in Vedic days scarcely, if at all, recognized. The dreadful practice of widow-burning has been brought in, and this by a most daring perversion of the Vedic texts. Woman, in fact, has fallen far below the position assigned her in early days.

One of the notable things in connection with the

¹ But the truth is that every man is accounted a good Hindu who keeps the rules of caste, and pays due respect to the Brahmans. What he believes, or disbelieves, is of little or no consequence.

reconstruction of Hinduism is the position it gives to the Trimurti, or triad of gods—Brahmâ, Vishṇu, and Śiva. Something like an anticipation of this had been presented in the later Vedic times: Fire, Air, and the Sun (Agni, Vâyû, and Sûrya) being regarded by the commentator¹ as summing up the divine energies. But in the Vedas the deities often go in pairs; and little stress should be laid on the idea of a Vedic triad. That idea, however, came prominently forward in later days. The worship both of Vishṇu and Śiva may have existed, from ancient times, as popular rites not acknowledged by the Brahmans; but both of these deities were now fully recognized. The god Brahmâ was an invention of the Brahmans; he was no real divinity of the people, and has hardly ever been actually worshipped. It is usual to designate Brahmâ, Vishṇu, and Śiva as Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer respectively; but the generalization is by no means well maintained in the Hindu books.

The
Trimurti, a
triad of
gods.

The Purânas are in general violently sectarian; some being Vishnuite, others Śivite. It is in connexion with Vishṇu, especially, that the idea of incarnation becomes prominent. The Hindu term is *Avatâra*, literally, *descent*; the deity is represented as descending from heaven to earth, for the vindication of truth and righteousness, or to use the words ascribed to Krishna:

The
Avatâras.

¹ Yâska; probably in the 5th century B.C.

For the preservation of the good, and the destruction of the wicked,

For the establishment of religion, I am born from age to age.

The
"descents"
of Vishnu.

The "descents" of Vishnu are usually reckoned ten. Of these by far the most celebrated are those of Râma and Krishna. The great importance attached to these two deities has been traced to the influence of Buddhism. That system had exerted immense power in consequence of the gentle and attractive character ascribed to Buddha. The older gods were dim, distant, and often stern; some near, intelligible, and loving divinity was longed for. Buddha was a brother man, and yet a quasi-deity; and hearts longing for sympathy and succour were strongly attracted by such a personality.

The god
Râma.

The character of Râma—or Râmachandra—is possessed of some high qualities. The great poem in which it is described at fullest length—the Râmâyana of Valmiki—seems to have been an alteration, made in the interests of Hinduism, of early Buddhist legends; and the Buddhist quality of gentleness has not disappeared in the history.¹ Râma, however, is far from a perfect character. His wife Sîtâ is possessed of much womanly grace, and every wifely virtue; and the sorrowful story of the warrior-god and his faithful spouse has appealed to deep sympathies in the human breast.

¹ Weber thinks that Christian elements may have been introduced, in course of time, into the representation.

The worship of Râma has seldom, if ever, degenerated into lasciviousness. In spite, however, of the charm thrown around the life of Râma and Sîtâ by the genius of Valmîki and Tulsidâs,¹ it is Krishna, not Râma, that has attained the greatest popularity among the "descents" of Vishṇu.

Very different morally from that of Râma is the character of Kṛishṇa. While Râma is but a partial manifestation of divinity, Krishna is a full manifestation;—yet what a manifestation! He is represented as full of naughty tricks in his youth, although exercising the highest powers of deity; and, when he grows up, his conduct is grossly immoral and disgusting. It is most startling to think that this being is by grave writers—like the authors of the Bhagavad Gîtâ and the Bhâgavata Purâna—made the highest of the gods, or indeed the only real God. Stranger still, if possible, is the probability that the early life of Krishna—in part, at least—is a dreadful travesty of the early life of Christ, as given in the apocryphal Gospels, especially the Gospel of the Infancy. The falling off in the apocryphal Gospels, when compared with the canonical, is truly sad; but the falling off even from the apocryphal ones, in the Hindu books, is altogether sickening.²

Krishna.

His early life a travesty of the life of Christ, according to the Gospel of the Infancy.

¹ His Ramayan was written in Hindi verse in the sixteenth century.

² When Jhânsi was captured in the times of the great mutiny,

A very striking characteristic of modern Hinduism is what is termed *bhakti*, or devotion. There are three great ways of attaining to salvation: *karma mârگا*, or the way of ceremonial works; *jnâna mârگا*, or the way of knowledge; and *bhakti mârگا*, or the way of devotion.

Doctrine of
bhakti
introduced.

The notion of trust in the gods was familiar to the mind of India from Vedic days, but the deity was indistinct and unsympathetic, and there could hardly be love and attachment to him. But there now arose the doctrine of *bhakti* (devotion), which resolved religion into emotion. It came into the Hindu system rather abruptly; and many learned men have traced its origin to the influence of Christianity. This is quite possible; but perhaps the fact is hardly proved. Contact with Christianity, however, probably accelerated a process which had previously begun. At all events the system of *bhakti* has had, and still has, great sway in India—particularly in Bengal, among the followers of Chaitanya, and the large body of people in Western India who style themselves *Vaishnavas*

Influence of
the system

English officers were disgusted to see the walls of the queen's palace covered with what they described as "grossly obscene" pictures. There is little or no doubt that these were simply representations of the acts of Krishna. Therefore to the Hindu queen they were religious pictures. When questioned about such things the Brahmans reply that deeds which would be wicked in men, were quite right in Krishna; who, being God, could do whatever he pleased.

or *Bhaktas* (devotees). The popular poetry of Mahârâshtra, as exemplified in such poets as Tukârâma, is an impassioned inculcation of devotion to Viṭhobâ of Pandharpur, who is a manifestation of Krishna. Into the *bhakti* system of Western India Buddhist elements have entered; and the school of devotees is often denominated Bauddha-Vaishnava. Along with extravagant idolatry it inculcates generally—at least in the Marâthâ country—a pure morality;—and the latter it apparently owes to Buddhism. Yet there are many sad lapses from purity. Almost of necessity the worship of Krishna led to corruption. The hymns became erotic; and movements hopeful at their commencement—like that of Chaitanya of Bengal, in the 16th century—soon grievously fell off in character. The attempt to make religion consist of emotion without thought—of *bhakti* without *jnâna*—had disastrous issues. Coincident with the development of *bhakti* was the exaltation of the *guru*, or religious teacher, which soon amounted to deification;—a change traceable from about the 12th century A.D.

Mixed with
Buddhist
elements.

Exaltation
of the *guru*

When pressed on the subject of Krishna's evil deeds, many are anxious to explain them as allegorical representations of the union between the divinity and true worshippers; but some interpret them in the most literal way possible. This is done especially by the followers of Vallabha

Explanations
of
Krishna's
evil deeds.

Achârya.¹ These men attained a most unenviable notoriety about twenty years ago, when a case was tried in the Supreme Court of Bombay, which revealed the practice of the most shameful licentiousness by the religious teachers and their female followers—and this as a part of worship! The disgust excited was so great and general that it was believed the influence of the sect was at an end; but this hope unhappily has not been realized.

Reforms
attempted.

Reformers have arisen from time to time in India; men who saw the deplorable corruption of religion, and strove to restore it to what they considered purity. Next to Buddha we may mention Kabir; to whom are ascribed many verses still popular. Probably the doctrine of the unity of God, as maintained by the Mohammadans, had impressed him. He opposed idolatry, caste, and Brahmanical assumption. Yet his monotheism was a kind of pantheism. His date may be the beginning of the fifteenth century. Nânak followed, and founded the religion of the Sikhs. His sacred book, the *Granth*, is mainly pantheistic: it dwells earnestly on devotion—especially devotion to the *guru*. The Sikhs now seem slowly relapsing into idolatry. In truth, the history of all attempts at reformation in India has been most discouraging. Sect after sect has successively risen to some elevation above the prevalent idolatry; and then

Kabir.

Nânak.

¹ Born probably in 1649.

gradually, as by some irresistible gravitation, it has sunk back into the *mare magnum* of Hinduism. If we regard experience, purification from within is hopeless; the struggle for it is only a repetition of the toil of Sisyphus, and always with the same sad issue. Deliverance must come from without—from the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Failure of all reforms.

We mentioned the Tantras as exerting great influence in later days.¹ In these the worship of Śiva, and still more, that of his wife is predominant. The deity is now supposed to possess a double nature,—one quiescent, one active; the latter being regarded as the *śakti* or energy of the god, otherwise called his wife. The origin of the system is not fully explained: nor is the date of its rise ascertained. The worship assumes wild, extravagant forms,—generally obscene, sometimes bloody. It is divided into two schools—that of the right hand and that of the left. The former runs into mysticism and magic in complicated observances; and the latter into the most appalling licentiousness. The worship of the Śakti, or female principle, has become a most elaborate system. The beings adored are “the most outrageous divinities which man has ever conceived.”² Sorcery began early

Influence of the Tantras

Worship of the Śakti.

¹ Rājā Nārāyan Basu (Bose), in enumerating the sacred books of Hinduism, excluded the philosophical systems, and included the Tantras. He was and, we believe, is a leading man in the Ādi Brahma Samāḥ.

² Barth, as above, p. 202.

in India ; but it is in connection with this system that it attains to full development. Human sacrifices are a normal part of the worship, when fully performed. We cannot go farther into detail. It is profoundly saddening to think that such abominations are committed ; it is still more saddening to think that they are performed as a part of divine worship. Conscience, however, is so far alive that these detestable rites are practised only in secret ; and few, if any, are willing to confess that they have been initiated as worshippers.

Modern ritual.

We have not yet said much about the ritual of modern days. It is exceedingly complicated. In the case of the god Śiva the rites are as follows, when performed by a priest in the temple :—

Worship of Śiva.

The Brahman first bathes, then enters the temple, and bows to the god. He anoints the image with clarified butter or boiled oil ; pours pure water over it ; and then wipes it dry. He grinds some white powder, mixing it with water ; dips the ends of his three fore fingers in it, and draws them across the image. He sits down ; meditates ; places rice and *durwa* grass on the image,—places a flower on his own head, and then on the top of the image ; then another flower on the image, and another, and another,—accompanying each act with the recitation of sacred spells ; places white powder, flowers, bilva leaves, incense, meat-offerings, rice, plantains, and a lamp before the image ; repeats the name of Siva, with praises, then prostrates himself before the image. In the evening he returns, washes his feet, prostrates himself before the door, opens the door, places a lamp within, offers milk, sweetmeats, and fruits to the image, prostrates himself before it, locks the door and departs.

Very similar is the worship paid to Vishṇu :—

The priest bathes, and then awakes the sleeping god by blowing

a shell and ringing a bell. More abundant offerings are made than to Śiva. About noon, fruits, roots, soaked peas, sweetmeats, etc., are presented. Then later, boiled rice, fried herbs, and spices; but no flesh, fish, nor fowl. After dinner, betel nut. The god is then left to sleep; and the temple is shut up for some hours. Towards evening curds, butter, sweetmeats, fruits, are presented. At sunset a lamp is brought, and fresh offerings made. Lights are waved before the image; a small bell is rung: water is presented for washing the mouth, face, and feet,—with a towel to dry them. In a few minutes the offerings and the lamp are removed: and the god is left to sleep in the dark.

Worship of
Vishnu.

The prescribed worship is not always fully performed. Still, sixteen things are essential; of which the following are the most important:—

“1st. Preparing a seat for the god; invoking his presence; bathing the image; clothing it; putting the string round it; offering perfumes; flowers; incense; lamps; offerings of fruits and prepared eatables: betel nut; prayers; circumambulation. An ordinary worshipper presents some of the offerings, mutters a short prayer or two, when circumambulating the image; the rest being done by the priest.¹

We give one additional specimen of the ritual:

“As an atonement for unwarily eating or drinking what is forbidden, eight hundred repetitions of the Gayatri prayer should be preceded by three suppressions of the breath, water being touched during the recital of the following text: ‘The bull roars; he has four horns, three feet, two heads, seven hands; and is bound by a three-fold cord; he is the mighty, resplendent being, and pervades mortal men.’”²

The bull is understood to be justice personified. All Brahmanical ceremonies exhibit, we may say, ritualism and symbolism run mad.

¹ So writes Vans Kennedy, a good authority. The *rites*, however, vary with varying places.

² *Asiatic Researches*, V. p. 356.

Caste.

The most prominent and characteristic institution of Hinduism is Caste. The power of caste is as irrational as it is unbounded; and it works almost unmixed evil. The touch—even the shadow—of a low caste man pollutes. The Scriptural precept, “Honour all men,” appears to a true Hindu infinitely absurd. He honours and worships a cow; but he shrinks with horror from the touch of a Mhâr or Mâng. Even Brahmans, if they come from different provinces, will not eat together. Thus Hinduism separates man from man; it goes on dividing and still dividing; and new fences to guard imaginary purity are continually added.

Treatment of women.

The whole treatment of women has gradually become most tyrannical and unjust. In very ancient days they were held in considerable respect; but, for ages past, the idea of woman has been steadily sinking lower and lower, and her rights have been more and more assailed. The burning of widows has been prohibited by enactment;¹ but the awful rite would in many places be restored were it not for the strong hand of the British government. The practice of marrying women in childhood is still generally—all but universally—prevalent; and when, owing to the zeal of reformers, a case of widow-marriage occurs, its rarity makes it be hailed as a signal triumph. Multitudes of the so-called widows were never

¹ In British territory since 1829.

really wives, their husbands (so-called) having died in childhood. Widows are subjected to treatment which they deem worse than death; and yet their number, it is calculated, amounts to about twenty-one millions! More cruel and demoralizing customs than exist in India in regard to women can hardly be found among the lowest barbarians. We are glad to escape from dwelling on points so exceedingly painful.

IV.

CONTRAST WITH CHRISTIANITY.

THE immense difference between the Hindu and Christian religions has doubtless already frequently suggested itself to the reader. It will not be necessary, therefore, to dwell on this topic at very great length. The contrast forces itself upon us at every point.

When, about fifteen centuries B.C., the Âryas were victoriously occupying the Panjâb, and the Israelites were escaping from the "iron furnace" of Egypt, if one had been asked which of the two races would probably rise to the highest conception of the divine, and contribute most largely to the well-being of mankind, the answer, quite possibly, might have been, the Âryas. Egypt, with its brutish idolatries, had corrupted the faith of the Israelites, and slavery had crushed all manliness

The Âryas and Israelites—their probable future, about 1500 B.C.

Contrast of
their after
history.

out of them. Yet how wonderful has been their after history! Among ancient religions that of the Old Testament stands absolutely unique; and in the fulness of time it blossomed into Christianity. How is the marvel to be explained? We cannot account for it except by ascribing it to a divine election of the Israelites, and a providential training intended to fit them to become the teachers of the world. "Salvation is of the Jews."

The contrast between the teachings of the Bible and those of the Hindu books is simply infinite.

Hindu
theology
compared
with
Christian.

The conception of a purely immaterial Being, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, which is that of the Bible regarding God, is entirely foreign to the Hindu books. Their doctrine is various; but, in every case, erroneous. It is absolute pantheism; or polytheism; or an inconsistent blending of polytheism and pantheism; or atheism.

Equally striking is the contrast between Christianity and Hinduism as to the attributes of God. According to the former, He is omnipresent; omnipotent; possessed of every excellence—holiness, justice, goodness, truth. According to the chief Hindu philosophy, the Supreme is devoid of attributes—devoid of consciousness. According to the popular conception, when the Supreme becomes conscious, He is developed into three gods, who possess respectively the qualities of truth, passion, and darkness.

“God is a Spirit.” “God is light.” “God is love.” These sublime declarations have no counterparts in Hinduism. Conceptions of God.

He is “the Father of spirits,” according to the Bible. According to Hinduism, the individual spirit is a portion of the divine. Even the common people firmly believe this.

Every thing is referred by Hinduism to God as its immediate cause. A Christian is continually shocked by the Hindus ascribing all sin to God as its source.

The adoration of God as a Being possessed of every glorious excellence is earnestly commanded in the Bible. “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God; and Him only shalt thou serve.” In India the Supreme is never worshipped; but any one of the multitudinous gods may be so; and, in fact, every thing can be worshipped *except* God. A maxim in the mouth of every Hindu is the following: “Where there is faith, there is God.” Believe the stone a god, and it is so. The object of worship.

Every sin being traced to God as its ultimate source, the sense of personal guilt is very slight among Hindus. Where it exists it is generally connected with ceremonial defilement or the breach of some one of the innumerable and meaningless rites of the religion. How unlike in all this is the Gospel! The Bible dwells with all possible earnestness on the evil of sin—not of ceremonial The sense of sin.

but moral defilement—the transgression of the divine law, the eternal law of right.

Atonement. How important a place in the Christian system is held by Atonement—the great atonement made by Christ—it is unnecessary to say. Nor need we enlarge on the extraordinary power it exercises over the human heart,—at once filling it with contrition, hatred of sin, and overflowing joy. We turn to Hinduism; alas! we find that the earnest questionings and higher views of the ancient thinkers have in a great degree been ignored in later times. Sacrifice in its original form has passed away. Atonement is often spoken of; but it is only some paltry device or other, such as eating the five products of the cow, going on pilgrimage to some sacred shrine, paying money to the priests, or it may be some bodily penance, that is had recourse to. Such expedients leave no impression on the heart as to the true nature, and essential evil, of sin.

Salvation. Salvation, in the Christian system, denotes deliverance not only from the punishment of sin, but from its power,—implying a renovation of the moral nature. The entire man is to be rectified in heart, speech, and behaviour. The perfection of the individual, and through that the perfection of society, are the objects aimed at; and the consummation desired is the doing of the will of God on earth, as it is done in heaven. Now of all this

Sanctification.

—surely a magnificent ideal—we find in Hinduism no trace whatever.

Christianity is emphatically a religion of hope ; Hinduism may be designated a religion of despair. Views of life. The trials of life are many and great ; Christianity bids us regard them as discipline from a Father's hand, and tells us that affliction rightly borne yields ' the peaceable fruits of righteousness.' To death the Christian looks forward without fear ; to him it is a quiet sleep ; and the resurrection draws nigh. Then comes the beatific vision of God. Glorified in soul and body, the companion of angels and saints, strong in immortal youth, he will serve without let or hindrance the God and Saviour whom he loves. To the Hindu the trials of life are penal, not remedial. At death his soul passes into another body. Rightly, every human soul animates in succession eighty-four laes (8,400,000) of bodies—the body of a human being, or a beast, or a bird, or a fish, or a plant, or a stone, according to desert. This weary, all but endless, round of births, fills the mind of a Hindu with the greatest horror. At last the soul is lost in God, as a drop mingles with the ocean ; individual existence and consciousness then cease. The thought is profoundly sorrowful that this is the cheerless faith of countless multitudes. No wonder, though the great tenet of Hinduism is this—*Existence is misery.* The great tenet of Hinduism.

So much for the future of the individual. Re-

The future
of the race.

garding the future of the race, Hinduism speaks in equally cheerless terms. Its golden age lies in the immeasurably distant past; and the further we recede from it, the deeper must we plunge into sin and wretchedness. True, ages and ages hence, the "Age of Truth" returns; but it returns only to pass away again, and torment us with the memory of lost purity and joy. The experience of the universe is thus an eternal renovation of hope and disappointment. In the struggle between good and evil there is no final triumph for the good. We tread a fated, eternal round from which there is no escape; and alike the hero fights, and the martyr dies, in vain.

The struggle
between
good and
evil.

It is remarkable that acute intellectual men—as many of the Hindu poets were—should never have grappled with the problem of the Divine government of the world.

The future
of the
Aryan race.

Equally notable is the unconcern of the Veda as to the welfare and the future of even the Aryan race. But how sublime is the promise given to Abraham, that in him and his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed! Renan has pointed with admiration to the confidence entertained at all times by the Jew in a brilliant and happy future for mankind. The ancient Hindu cared not about the future of his neighbours; and doubtless even the expression "human race" would have been unintelligible to him.—Nor is there any pathos in the Veda; there is no deep sense of

the sorrows of life.—Max Müller has affixed the epithet “transcendent” to the Hindu mind. Its bent was much more towards the metaphysical, the mystical, the incomprehensible, than towards the moral and the practical. Hence endless subtleties, more meaningless and unprofitable than ever occupied the mind of Talmudist or schoolman of the middle ages.

But finally, on this part of the subject,—the development of Indian religion supplies a striking comment on the words of St. Paul :

The words of St. Paul illustrated by Hinduism.

“The invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood from the things that are made. But when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”

Hinduism is deplorably deficient in power to raise and purify the human soul, from having no high example of moral excellence. Its renowned sages were noted for irritability and selfishness—great men at cursing ;—and the gods for the most part were worse. Need we say how gloriously rich the Gospel is in having, in the character of Christ, the realized ideal of every possible excellence ?

Moral power.

Summa religionis est imitari quem colis : “It is the sum of religion to imitate the being worshipped.”¹ Or, as the Hindus express it : “As is the deity, such is the devotee.” Worship the God revealed in the Bible, and you become godlike ; the soul

Ethical effect of Hinduism.

¹ Cicero.

strives, with Divine aid, to "purify itself even as God is pure." But apply the principle to Hinduism. Alas! the Pantheon is almost a pandemonium. Krishna, who in these days is the chief deity to at least a hundred millions of people, does not possess one elevated attribute. If, in these circumstances, society does not become a moral pesthouse, it is only because the people continue better than their religion. The human heart, though fallen, is not fiendish. It has still its purer instincts; and, when the legends about abominable gods and goddesses are falling like mildew, these are still to some extent kept alive by the sweet influences of earth and sky, and by the charities of family life. When the heart of woman is about to be swept into the abyss, her infant's smile restores her to her better self. Thus family life does not go to ruin; and, so long as that anchor holds, society will not drift on the rocks that stand so perilously near. Still, the state of things is deplorably distressing.

The people
better than
their
religion.

The
doctrine of
Incarnation.

The doctrine of the Incarnation is of fundamental importance in Christianity. It seems almost profanation to compare it with the Hindu teaching regarding the Avatâras, or Descents of Vishnu. It is difficult to extract any meaning out of the three first manifestations—when the god became in succession a fish, a boar, and a tortoise. Of the great "descents" in Râma and Krishna,

we have already spoken. The ninth Avatâra was that of Buddha,—in which the deity descended for the purpose of deceiving men, making them deny the gods, and leading them to destruction. So blasphemous an idea may seem hardly possible even for the bewildered mind of India ; but this is doubtless the Brahmanical explanation of the rise and progress of Buddhism ; it was fatal error, but inculcated by a divine being ! Even the sickening tales of Krishna and his amours are less shocking than this. When we turn from such representations of divinity to “the Word made flesh,” we seem to have escaped from the pestilential air of a charnel house to the sweet pure breath of heaven.

V.

HINDUISM IN CONTACT WITH CHRISTIANITY.

WE have used the word *reformer* in this Tract. We formerly noted that, in India, there have arisen from time to time, men who saw and sorrowed over the erroneous doctrines and degrading rites of the popular system.

Attempted reforms.

In quite recent times they have had successors. Some account of their work may form a fitting conclusion to our discussion.

With the large influx into India of Christian ideas it was to be expected that some impression

Advance of
Christianity
in India.

would be made on Hinduism. We do not refer to conversion—the full acceptance of the Christian faith. Christianity has advanced and is advancing in India more rapidly than is generally supposed; but far beyond the circle of those who “come out and are separate,” its mighty power is telling on Hinduism. The great fundamental truths of the Gospel, when once uttered and understood, can hardly be forgotten. Disliked and denied they may be; but forgotten? No. Thus, they gradually win their way; and multitudes who have no thought of becoming Christians are ready to admit that they are beautiful and true,—for belief and practice are often widely separated in Hindu minds.

The Brâhma
Samâj.

But it was to be expected that the new ideas pouring into India—and among these we include not only distinctively Christian ideas, but Western thought generally—would manifest their presence and activity in concrete forms—in attempted reconstructions of religion. The most remarkable example of such a reconstruction is exhibited in the Brahmo Somaj (more correctly Brâhma Samâj)—which may be rendered the “Church of God.”

Rammohun
Roy.

It is traceable to the efforts of a truly distinguished man, Rammohun Roy. He was a person of studious habits, intelligent, acute; and deeply in earnest on the subject of religion. He studied not only Hinduism in its various forms, but Buddhism, Mohammadanism, and Christianity.

He was naturally an eclectic—gathering truth from all quarters where he thought he could find it. A specially deep impression was made on his mind by Christianity; and in 1820 he published a book with the remarkable title, “The precepts of Jesus the guide to peace and happiness.” Very frequently he gave expression to the sentiment that the teachings of Christ were the truest and deepest that he knew. Still, he did not believe in Christ’s divinity.

Effect of
Christianity
upon him.

In January, 1830, a place of worship was opened by Rammohun Roy and his friends. It was intended for the worship of one God, without idolatrous rites of any kind. This was undoubtedly a very important event; and great was the interest aroused in connection with it. Rammohun Roy, however, visited Britain in 1831, and died at Bristol in 1833; and the cause for which he had so earnestly laboured in India languished for a time. But in the year 1841, Debendernath Tagore, a man of character and wealth, joined the Brahma Somaj, and gave a kind of constitution to it. It was fully organized by 1844. No definite declaration, however, had been made as to the authority of the Vedas; but, after a lengthened period of inquiry and discussion, a majority of the Somaj rejected the doctrine of their infallibility by 1850. “The rock of intuition” now began to be spoken of; man’s reason was his

Debender-
nath Tagore.

Keshub
Chunder
Sen.

Formation
of a new
Samāj.

sufficient guide. Still, great respect was cherished for the ancient belief and customs of the land. But in 1858 a new champion appeared on the scene, in the well-known Keshub Chunder Sen. Ardent, impetuous, ambitious — full of ideas derived from Christian sources¹—he could not brook the slow movements of the Somaj in the path of reform. Important changes, both religious and social, were pressed by him; and the more conservative Debendernath somewhat reluctantly consented to their introduction. Matters were, however, brought to a crisis by the marriage of two persons of different castes in 1864. In February, 1865, the progressive party formally severed their connection with the original Somāj; and in August, 1869, they opened a new place of worship of their own. Since this time the original or *Adi Somāj* has been little heard of; and its movement—if it has moved at all—has been retrogressive. The new Somaj—the *Brahmo Somaj of India*, as it called itself,—under the guidance of Mr. Sen became very active. A missionary institute was set up, and preachers were sent over a great part of India. Much was accomplished on behalf of women; and in 1872 a Marriage Act for members of the Somaj was passed by the Indian

¹ We learned from his own lips that among the books which most deeply impressed him were the Bible and the writings of Dr. Chalmers.

legislature, which legalized union between people of different castes, and fixed on fourteen as the lowest age for the marriage of females. These were important reforms.

Mr. Sen's influence was naturally and necessarily great; but, in opposing the venerable leader of the original Somaj, he had set an example which others were quite willing to copy.

Several of his followers began to demand more radical reforms than he was willing to grant. The autocracy exercised by Mr. Sen was strongly objected to; and a constitution of the Somaj was demanded. Mr. Sen openly maintained that heaven from time to time raises up men endowed with special powers, and commissioned to introduce new forms or "dispensations" of religion; and his conduct fully proved that he regarded himself as far above his followers. Complaints became louder; and although the eloquence and genius of Keshub were able to keep the rebellious elements from exploding, it was evident, as early as 1873, that a crisis was approaching. This came in 1878, when Mr. Sen's daughter was married to the Mahârâjâ of Kuch Behar. The bride was not fourteen, and the bridegroom was sixteen. Now, Mr. Sen had been earnest and successful in getting the **Brahmo Marriage Act** passed, which ruled that the **lowest marriageable age** for a woman was

Discontent
growing.

fourteen, and for a man, eighteen. Here was gross inconsistency. What could explain it? "Ambition," exclaimed great numbers; "the wish to exalt himself and his daughter by alliance with a prince." But Mr. Sen declared that he had consented to the marriage in consequence of an express intimation that such was the will of heaven. Mr. Sen denied miracles, but believed in inspiration; and of his own inspiration he seems to have entertained no doubt. We thus obtain a glimpse into the peculiar working of his mind. Every full conviction, every strong wish, of his own he ascribed to divine suggestion. This put him in a position of extreme peril. It was clear that an enthusiastic, imaginative, self-reliant nature like his might thus be borne on to any extent of fanaticism.

Revolt.
A third
Samâj.

A great revolt from Mr. Sen's authority now took place; and the Sâdhârâṇ Samâj was organized in May, 1878. An appeal had been made to the members generally; and no fewer than twenty-one provincial Samâjes, with more than 400 members, male and female, joined the new society. This number amounted to about two-thirds of the whole body. Keshub and his friends denounced the rebels in very bitter language; and yet, in one point of view, their secession was a relief. Men of abilities equal, and education superior, to his own had hitherto acted as a drag on his movements; he

was now delivered from their interference, and could deal with the admiring and submissive remnant as he pleased. Ideas that had been working in his mind now attained rapid development. Within two years the flag of the "New Dispensation" was raised; and of that dispensation Mr. Sen was the undoubted head. Very daring was the language Mr. Sen used in a public lecture regarding this new creation. He claimed equality for it with the Jewish and Christian dispensations, and for himself "singular" authority and a Divine commission.

"New Dispensation."

In the Creed of the New Dispensation the name of Christ does not occur. The articles were as follows:—

Its creed.

a. One God, one Scripture, one Church. *b.* Eternal progress of the Soul. *c.* Communion of Prophets and Saints. *d.* Fatherhood and Motherhood of God. *e.* Brotherhood of Man, and Sisterhood of Woman. *f.* Harmony of knowledge and holiness, love and work, yoga and asceticism in their highest development. *g.* Loyalty to Sovereign.

The omission of Christ's name is the more remarkable because Mr. Sen spoke much of Him in his public lectures. He had said in May, 1879, "None but Jesus, none but Jesus, none but Jesus ever deserved this precious diadem, India; and Jesus shall have it." But he clearly indicated that the Christ he sought was an Indian Christ; one who was "a Hindu in faith," and who would help

Omission of Christ's name.

the Hindus to “realize their national idea of a yogi” (ascetic).

Let it be noted that, from the beginning of his career, Mr. Sen had spoken earnestly of the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man—though these great conceptions are not of Hindu origin. It is difficult to see why, in later days, he insisted so much on the “motherhood of God.” Perhaps it was a repetition—he probably would have called it an exaltation—of the old Hindu idea, prevalent especially among the worshippers of Śiva, that there is a female counterpart—a Śakti—of every divinity. Or, possibly, it may have been to conciliate the worshippers of Durgâ and Kâlî, those great goddesses of Bengal.

“Mother-
hood of
God.”

Public
proclamation
said to be
from God.

A public proclamation was soon issued, purporting to be from God Himself, as India’s Mother. The whole thing was very startling; many, even of Keshub’s friends, declared it blasphemous. Next, in the “Flag Ceremony,” the flag or banner of the New Dispensation received a homage scarcely distinguishable from worship. Then—as if in strict imitation of the ancient adoration of Agni, or Fire—a pile of wood was lighted, clarified butter poured on it, and prayers addressed to it, ending thus—“O brilliant Fire! in thee we behold our resplendent Lord.” This was, at least, symbolism run wild; and every one, except those who were prepared to follow their leader to all lengths, saw

that in a land like India, wedded to idolatry, it was fearfully perilous.

In March, 1881, Mr. Sen and his friends introduced celebrations which, to Christian minds, seemed a distressing caricature of the Christian sacraments. Other institutions followed; an Apostolic Durbar, (Court of Apostles), for instance, was established. There was no end to Mr. Sen's inventiveness.

"Apostolic Durbar."

In a public lecture delivered in January, 1883, on "Asia's message to Europe," he elaborately expounded the idea that all the great religions are of Asiatic origin, and that all of them are true; and that the one thing required to constitute the faith of the future—the religion of humanity—is the blending of all these varied Oriental systems into one.

It was not easy to reconcile Mr. Sen's public utterances with his private ones—though far be it from us to tax him with insincerity. Thus, in an interview extending over two hours, which the writer and two missionary friends had with him a week or so before the lecture now referred to, he said he accepted as true and vital all the leading doctrines of the Christian faith, with the exception of the resurrection of Christ. But another fundamental difference remained—he avowedly dissented from the orthodox creed in rejecting the miraculous element in Scripture. At an interview I had with him some time before, he earnestly disclaimed all

Inconsistencies between Mr. Sen's public and private utterances.

Mr. Sen's
policy of
reserve.

intention to put Christ on a level with Buddha or Mohammad. "I am educating my friends," he said, "to understand and approve of Christianity; I have not yet said my last word about Christ." It is a solemn question—Had he said it when his career was ended? If so, it was far from a satisfactory word. His policy of reserve and adaptation had probably kept him from uttering all that was in his heart; but it was a sorely mistaken policy. Had he temporized less, he would have accomplished more.

Since the death of Mr. Sen there has been a violent dispute between his family and the "Apostolic Durbar" on one side, and one of his ablest followers, on the other; and the New Dispensation will probably split in two, if it does not perish altogether.

The
Sâdhâran
Samâj.

In the meantime, the Sâdhâran Samâj, which broke off from Keshub's party in 1878, has been going on with no small vigour. Vagaries, either in doctrine or rites, have been carefully shunned; its partisans profess a pure Theistic creed, and labour diligently in the cause of social reform. Their position is nearly that of Unitarian Christianity; and we fear they are not at present approximating to the full belief of the Church Catholic.

Movements
in Western
India.

Very similar in character to the Brahmo Somaj is the Prârthanâ Somaj in Western India. As far back as 1850, or a little earlier, there was

formed a society called the Prârthanâ Sabhâ (Prayer Meeting). Its leading tenets were as follows:—

Tenets of the
Prârthanâ
Sabhâ.

1. I believe in one God. 2. I renounce idol-worship. 3. I will do my best to lead a moral life. 4. If I commit any sin through the weakness of my moral nature, I will repent of it, and ask the pardon of God.

The Society, after some time, began to languish; but in 1867 it was revived under the name of Prârthanâ Somaj. Its chief branches are in Bombay, Poona, Ahmedabad, and Surat.

An interesting movement called the Ârya Samâj was commenced a few years ago by a Pandit,—Dayânand Sarasvati. He received the Vedas as fully inspired, but maintained that they taught monotheism,—Agni, Indra, and all the rest being merely different names of God. It was a desperate effort to save the reputation of the ancient books; but, as all Sanskrit scholars saw at a glance, the whole idea was a delusion. The Pandit is now dead; and the Ârya Samâj may not long survive him.

Ârya
Samâj.

At the time we write we hear of an attempt to defend idolatry and caste made by men of considerable education.

The so-called “Theosophists” have, for several years, been active in India. Of existing religions, Buddhism is their natural ally. They are atheists. A combination which they formed with the Ârya Samâj speedily came to an end.

Theosophists

Lastly, the followers of Mr. Bradlaugh are diligent in supplying their books to Indian students.

Poor India! No wonder if her mind is bewildered as she listens to such a Babel of voices. The state of things in India now strikingly resembles that which existed in the Roman Empire at the rise of Christianity; when east and west were brought into the closest contact, and a great conflict of systems of thought took place in consequence.

But even as one hostile form of Gnostic belief rose after another, and rose only to fall,—and as the greatest and best-disciplined foe of early Christianity—the later Platonism—gave way before the steady, irresistible march of Gospel truth, so—we have every reason to hope—it will be yet again. The Christian feels his heart swell in his breast as he thinks what, in all human probability, India will be a century, or even half a century, hence. Oh what a new life to that fairest of Eastern lands, when she casts herself in sorrow and supplication at the feet of the Living God, and then rises to proclaim to a listening world

Her deep repentance and her new-found joy!

May God hasten the advent of that happy day!

BUDDHISM:
A COMPARISON AND A CONTRAST
BETWEEN
BUDDHISM AND CHRISTIANITY
BY
HENRY ROBERT REYNOLDS, D.D.

Argument of the Tract.

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BUDDHISM and CHRISTIANITY are compared and contrasted in respect to their external resemblances, and fundamental and essential divergencies and antitheses, viz. : their local origin; the histories of their founders; their relation to the past; the place given in both to the death of the founders; the basis of the two systems, and their historical development as organised societies; the resemblances are shown to be illusory in the extreme; the differences vital and all-important.

Christ revealed the Father—took human sorrows and death on Himself, that He might take them away; laid down His life, that He might take it again; died, the just for the unjust; He saves men from their sins. He fulfilled the law and the prophets. The highest Christian virtue is not practised for the extinction of desire, but because pardon through faith in Christ's blood has been received. Christian holiness is the purification of the most essential characteristics of human nature. The end set before the Christian is the hope of beholding Christ's glory, and being with Him and like Him for ever. The peace of the Christian is not the obliteration but the satisfaction of desire, and the result of reconciliation with God through Christ. The Christian desires that Christ may be magnified in his body whether by life or death.

The history of Buddhism is sketched, and the resemblances to the history of Christianity are shown to be in the laws that regulate all human society.

Buddhism knows no being as the First Cause of all things, as the basis of moral obligation, or Ruler of the universe.

The doctrine of Buddhism concerning the ground of the universe is agnostic, if not positively atheistic.

Law, according to Buddhism, is impersonal. It has no conception of pardon, redemption, or sacrifice, and is an exceeding bitter cry for what Christianity has to offer, viz. : an antidote for sin, reconciliation with God, hope in death, and union with God through Christ. Reason for hoping that when Christ is made known to it, Buddhism will call Him Lord of all.

B U D D H I S M



BUDDHISM in its origin was a philosophical method rather than a religious faith. Many experiments have been made by mighty thinkers to solve the mystery of human life. This was one of them. The principles of Gautama the Buddha, an Indian sage, were not absolutely new, nor were his methods unknown, when he essayed his memorable task. His immense personality, assisted by current tendencies at work in Hindû society, enabled him to originate a society, which has in its main features, during more than two thousand years, dominated large portions of the continent of Asia.

Buddhism a philosophical system rather than a religious faith.

The ideas and institutions which date from the initiatory of Gautama exercise a potent spell in their most antique form over Ceylon, British and Native Burmah, Siam, Anam, and (in the form of Jainism) over parts of North Western India. With large modification Buddhism has prevailed over eighteen provinces of China, where it is held in combination with Confucianism and Taoism. Buddhism has exerted much influence in Japan, **in** Japan.

The wide influence of Buddhism.

where it has suffered the embrace of the aboriginal nature-worship. It has been corrupted in some outlying tribes by devil-worship, and the rites of Siva. In Tibet it has developed into a complicated hierarchy, and has culminated in a patriarchal and pontifical régime. Here Buddhism is the State religion, and has created an organization and diffused ideas which have powerfully affected Mongolia, Mantchuria, and other states tributary to China.

In Nepal. In Nepal at one time a most impressive development of the Buddhistic faith prevailed, and one which was theoretically based on Monotheistic ideas. Though Buddhism took its origin in the Aryan, its greatest triumphs have been won over the Turanian races, and it has been compared to a vast parasitical growth, which has fed on the life and covered the institutions of various types of civilization. Its propaganda is not at an end. At the present hour it is said to be increasing in Tartary, it sends its missionaries to Australia and California, has made a vigorous attempt to cooperate with Western Pessimism, and professes to formulate a true philosophy of history.

Its present increase in Tartary.

Buddha and Buddhadom.

BUDDHA may be discriminated from the historical and practical issues of his thought, as CHRIST is discriminated from CHRISTENDOM.

If by "Buddhism" be meant the ideas and discipline of the earliest followers of Gautama, irrespective of their subsequent development, our

theme is a literary and exegetic one, and turns upon the relative value of Pâli, Sanscrit, Tibetan, and Chinese books. On the other hand, if "Buddhism" be regarded as synonymous with what may be called "Buddha-dom," it must be held to embrace the geographical and historic features of a whole cluster of religious institutions, which have mastered, for more than a thousand years, a fourth part of the human race. Seeing that the Northern Buddhists outnumber the older and more orthodox followers fifteen times over, we cannot exclude their peculiarities from our estimate of what Buddhism is, and its relation to both Christ and Christendom.

A whole cluster of religious institutions embraced in Buddha dom.

The comparison between Christianity and Buddhism embraces a comparison in both senses.

The *resemblances* between Buddha-dom and Christendom are imposing but superficial, they spring from the common material with which both systems have had to deal, and from the similar conditions under which they have laboured even for opposite ends.

The resemblances between Buddha-dom and Christendom superficial.

The *divergencies* and opposition, and utter dissimilarity between Buddhism and Christianity belong to their inmost essence and aim.

The purport of the present Tract is to illustrate this twofold representation by enumerating the details of this argument. In doing so, the reader will be reminded of the principal facts with reference to Buddha and his religion.

The divergencies and dissimilarity essential.

We propose to enumerate

I. *The impressive external resemblances between Buddhdom and Christendom, calling attention in these very respects to the contrasts which accompany them.*

II. *The fundamental divergencies and antitheses between Buddhism and Christianity.*

I.

I. THE HOLY LANDS.—These two religions resemble one another in having taken their origin in a limited geographical region, identified with the actions and career of their Founders, which after the lapse of time ceased to be the centres of the faith, but acquired a factitious importance and inspired a sentimental and superstitious reverence.

Sinai and Palestine still contain the sites where the highest manifestations of the living God have been made to men. The lands of the Bible have attracted pilgrims from the ends of the earth, who have there sought to deepen their faith, increase their knowledge, and satisfy their yearning after a closer intimacy with the facts of our redemption.

However spiritual the form of our Christianity may be, we cannot ignore the fact that its noblest ideas and principles arose by God's grace in human minds and lives, and that its most stupendous facts were enacted on this planet, by men and women

The geographical origin of the two religions.

The lands of the Bible.

Christian ideas and principles arose by God's grace in human hearts and lives.

who trod the soil of this solid earth. Christianity is not based on a mere speculation, a transcendental dream thought out in the spirit-world, and independent of place and time and circumstance. It rests on a notable series of historic facts, and is associated with certain events which occurred at discoverable dates in the drama of human life, and therefore scientific criticism as well as pious pilgrimage still gathers with zest and unabated interest around Sinai and Bethlehem, Calvary, and Olivet.

Christianity based on historic facts, hence the interest of the historic places.

Now Buddhism took its chief departure in the bosom of a Hindû Sage, whose ideas led him to certain very memorable acts of renunciation, to sore conflict, and life-long teaching. His birth and death, his parentage and consecration, with numerous events in his career, are associated with certain ascertainable sites. These have sustained through even a longer period than the holy places of Palestine have done, the reverence and affection of devout Buddhists. Between the outlying mountains of the Himalayan range and the Ganges, between long. E. 75° and 85°, watered by numerous rivers, and diversified with numerous centres of Hindû life; between Sravasti (*Sahet Mahet*) in N.W., Raja-Griha (*Raj-gir*), and Gaya and Pataliputra (*Patna*) in E. and S.E., will be found Kapilavastu, the birthplace of Gautama, and Kusinagara, the place where he died, and also

Buddhism originated in the bosom of a Hindu Sage whose birth, &c. are associated with certain sites

Places of Gautama's birth and death.

numerous other consecrated spots where the cremated ashes of his body rest. Here also are various scenes dear to the Buddhist legend, and for many ages visited by pilgrims from China and Mongolia, from Kashmir and Khotan, from Ceylon and Burmah. They were sacred places when Buddhism was still a dominant faith in N.W. India, and they were treated with even deeper reverence when the faith had perished on its earliest geographic site. Some of the most interesting Buddhistic literature which is still extant describes the eagerness and enthusiasm displayed by the pious devotees who, in the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries of our era, encountered incredible obstacles in their resolve to visit these sacred shrines, to obtain books, relics and images of the faith which was dear to them.

The superficial resemblances arise from the human interest attaching to spots where great things have been said or done.

This superficial resemblance to the outward career of a religion profoundly dissimilar in its essence, arises from the purely human interest that evermore attaches to the place where great things have been said and done. The parallel is not confined to the external features of Buddhism and Christianity. It runs through the history of other faiths which have travelled from their geographical origin to distant lands, and which yet have attracted undying affection to the cradle of their infancy.

2. The superficial resemblances between the **FOUNDERS** of Buddhism and Christianity.

The latest researches make it doubtful whether

Gautama, the son of Suddhodana, was the heir of a *royal* estate or dominion, as Jesus was, but the legend undoubtedly confers on his father and on the Sakyas this distinction, coupling it with august accessories, boundless wealth, and far-extending influence. Reverence for him, and an idea of his spotless purity of heart and life, assumed in the latest legend an introduction into the world by a supernatural process, which, from the first, singled out this great sage and recluse for the highest possible vocation. If he should become a king he was at once prophesied of as about to become the ruler over all lands and worlds; and if he should appear as a sage, he would be the long-expected *Buddha*, "the man perfectly enlightened," who would achieve the highest victories over the evils of humanity, and lead the human race towards the realization of its highest goal.

Hereditary rank of Gautama.

Supposed supernatural birth.

His destiny and mission.

There is no reason to question the *name* of the father of Gautama, the name of his wife—the saintly *Maya*, who died seven days after the birth of her child—or of the city (*Kapila-rastu*), where this extraordinary child first saw the light, in the sixth century B.C. The legends of China, Ceylon, and Nepal tell us that as soon as he was born he declared that this was his last birth, and that he was the greatest of all beings. Such supposed language indicates the reverence felt for his unique career in after years; so also does the pathetic

Legends concerning his birth.

incident, that after this precocious babe had placed his feet upon the head of one of the greatest sages, this wise man declared that Gautama would prove to be the Buddha, but he wept that he should not himself live to see the wondrous effect of his teaching and life.

Names given to him in later times.

The names given in later times to him are very numerous. Sākya-muni, "the Sākya sage;" Bhagava, "the blessed one;" Tathagata, "the excellent one;" Loka-nartha, "the Lord of the world;" Dharma-rajā, "the king of the law," or "of righteousness." These are poetic expressions denoting the range and depth of his subsequent influence. The natural desire of the father of Gautama that his son should be prepared for the office and dignities of a prince was strangely thwarted by the bent of the youthful prince towards philosophy and ascetic habit. He was married to the daughter of a king, and surrounded by all the blandishments of an Eastern court, but they all failed to disturb his meditation on the evils and transitory nature of human life.

The natural bent of Gautama.

The visions he saw in spite of his father's precautions to keep from him the facts of human sorrow.

The legends narrate the efforts made by his father to conceal from him the facts of human sorrow; but that, in spite of all precaution, he saw a vision of *old age*, with its wrinkled skin and tottering gait; another time, a victim of loathsome *disease*, of repulsive and forsaken aspect, and on a third occasion a *dead body* awaiting cremation.

After each vision he returned to his palace broken-hearted and despairing. It is said that on a fourth expedition, surrounded by all the pomp of the court, he saw the form of a rigid *ascetic*, who seemed to him to promise the only method of escape from the evils of life by extinction of ambition and concupiscence. The legends describe his marvellous skill in all athletic sports, and his superiority to all competitors in mental and physical powers; but nothing availed to prevent what has been called his "*Great Renunciation*," when, with a solitary attendant, he broke away from his home, wife, and only child, looked with loathing on the faded beauty of his singing women, as they lay in sleep around the courts of his harem, exchanged his dress with that of a mendicant, sent his attendant back with a message to his home, and commenced his memorable career of self-mortification, intent upon discovering the truth of human life. The intense picturesqueness of the main facts has been overlaid with a thousand ornamental additions to the story, which were calculated to augment the force of the "renunciation," and throw the spirit of it back into previous lives that he is supposed to have lived, in each of which he performed similar acts of abnegation and devotion to the highest interests of the living beings with whom he came into contact.¹

His physical and mental superiority.

His great renunciation

¹ Spence Hardy, *Manual of Buddhism*, pp. 98-359. Dr. R. Davids, *Jataka Stories*, Sacred Books of the East.

Doubtless there is some analogy between these stories, and the record of the introduction into the world of the Son of God, the song of angels, the prophecy of Simeon, and the solitary incident of the youth of Jesus as preserved in the canonical Gospels. But the essential distinction between them lies in this, that our Lord followed the lot of ordinary men, ate with publicans and sinners, notwithstanding his prophetic mission, pursued the quiet trade of his father Joseph, proclaimed war against sin, rather than against suffering, and far from accepting the transitory nature of earthly pleasure as a curse, poured new light on life and death. The fundamental principle of Buddha treated existence as a curse which must be evaded; the fundamental principle of Christ's "great renunciation" of honours and glory unutterable, involved the sublime fact that life was the synonym of blessedness, and that *that* blessedness might be eternal. He did not turn away from the agonies of human life. **He** treated them as abnormal, not inevitable. **He** took them upon Himself. He healed disease. He cleansed the leper. He raised the dead. He confidently affirmed, "Whoso liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

Contrast to the life of our Lord.

The fundamental principles of Buddha and Christ essentially divergent.

The temptation of Gautama.

A superficial resemblance to the career of our Divine Lord was an early temptation of Gautama to relinquish the sublime purpose on which he had entered. MARA, the spirit of evil, and an imper-

sonation of the idea of death, assailed him with thoughts which were to turn him aside from his beneficent career. Legend has amplified these in the later chronicles with the astounding efflorescence of Oriental imagination. He was approached by seductive hallucinations, and when wanton beauty failed, *Mara* put forth the thunders of his wrath, and hurled a hundred thousand burning mountains (!) at him, but they fell in garlands of flowers at his feet. He overcame all the threats, and seductions, and illusions of the spirit of evil, and continued his self-sacrifice.

Legendary amplifications of the story.

His victory over it.

This great event in Buddha's life, in which he won the victory over all evil suggestion, was accompanied, according to the legend, with physical convulsions of nature. The sun was turned into darkness, the stars fell from heaven, "headless spirits filled the air."

Accompanying physical portents.

This conflict, in which the moral greatness of Gautama appeared triumphant, was connected with an effort on his part to gather from the known Brahman teachers who preceded him, all such light as they could give him as to the cause and termination of human sorrow. Their methods and their reasonings dissatisfied him. He also made trial of the most complete ascetic rule, and practised abstention from food and extreme mortification of the flesh. He is said to have spent six years in these exercises, to have secured

His conflict connected with his inquiries as to the cause and termination of human sorrow.

His failure to solve the great problem, and the abandonment of his bodily mortification.

Abandoned by his disciples he betakes himself to the Bô-tree.

There learns the thought that perfect peace is attained by inward culture

Shadowy resemblances to the temptation and victory of Christ.

thereby the greatest reputation as a lonely hermit, and to have drawn around him admirers and imitators. Wiser than the Stylites of Christian asceticism, Gautama found that he came no nearer to the solution of his great problem, and resolved to alter his course, to take food, to renounce his bodily mortification.

In doing this he alienated his earliest disciples, who fled from him to Benares, leaving him, stung by their lack of appreciation, to encounter with surprising courage new difficulties. It was after his friends left him, that he retired to the shade of a Bô-tree, at Gaya, known ever since as the most sacred spot in Buddhadom. There he passed through the crisis of his ministry, coming by stern exercise of thought to the idea, that not by outward penances, but by inward culture; not by rites and ceremonies, but by love and gentleness to others; not by spitefully punishing the flesh, but by the cessation of all desire, by the blowing out of the fires of lust and anger and illusion, he would reach a state of mind which would be perfect peace.

This series of struggles and conflicts of the man Gautama bears a shadowy but not a real resemblance to the temptation and the victory of the Lord Christ. In the case of Jesus, absolute loyalty to the Holy Father's will, when He was tempted by the flesh and the devil to secure that very will by

self-gratification, was triumphant over every seduction. The Bô-tree of Buddhism corresponds in vague way with the Cross, "the cursed tree" on which the Saviour died, but it suggests throughout profoundly different ideas. The "sacred tree" of Buddhism is a symbol of the highest point of exaltation which Oriental intelligence and virtue ever reached. The "cursed tree" of Christianity, where Jesus the Just died for the unjust, is a symbol of the most terrible condemnation of human corruption; but the most amazing manifestation of the love, the righteousness, the justice, the wisdom and power of God.

The Buddhist Bô-tree and the Cross of Christ suggest profoundly different ideas.

There is no need to throw a single shadow over the moral excellence of Gautama. He went about preaching and teaching the deliverance that he believed himself to have found from all the evils incident to human life. His methods were those of moral suasion. He adopted no arm of power to enforce submission to his method or secret. The parabolic style of instruction gave vivacity to his discourse. He called upon men to pursue the middle path between the pleasures of sense, and the mortifications of the ascetic schools.

Gautama's teaching and methods.

"Sorrow" was with him the direct consequence of the sense of individuality, and consciousness of desire thwarted or ungratified. Cessation of sorrow was only to be secured by freedom from all these causes of sorrow, all the cravings which prole-

His view of sorrow and how to procure its cessation

The Hindu theory of the ego accepted and utilised by him.

the illusion of one's separate interests or individual being. He approximated to the Hindu theory, which makes consciousness of the Ego an illusion, and all the facts of human life and mundane existence as waves passing over a boundless ocean of being. Accepting this as the deepest truth, Gautama utilized it, as the gospel of deliverance from all the miseries of existence, and endeavoured to bring his followers to his own placid view of the boundless evils of life by the practice of a virtue which aimed at the obliteration of desire. Desire was the radical source of every calamity from birth to death, and after death.

Desire, according to him, the source of every calamity.

The demands of Christ essentially different.

From reasons utterly diverse from these, our Lord demanded inward purity, and holy conduct, simplicity of motive, and detachment from the world. His disciples were to take up the Cross and follow Him, to come to Him, and to rest in Him, to take sides with Him against sin, to believe in Him, as one able to save and to confer eternal life, as One destined to judge all conduct and motive, and all the inward springs of life. He promised to do that for men by His own perfection of being and sacrifice which they could not do for themselves. He saved men from their sins. The highest virtue in the theory of Gautama was pursued and practised with the view of extinguishing all desire whatsoever, and of losing all consciousness of Ego. He taught men to lose

His promises.

His salvation.

self, not in the bosom of the eternal Being, but in the ocean of *non-existence*. The highest virtue in the way revealed by our Lord Jesus Christ, follows as a consequence of our having received a new and nobler Ego, and because our sins have been pardoned through faith in His atoning blood. The highest kind of Christian life involves a quenchless yearning after God Himself, a supreme love to the Father, and to Christ as the revelation of the Father. The Buddha's holiness was the extinction of the most essential characteristics of human nature; the Christ's holiness was the purification and intensification of all those characteristics. The end set before the pious follower of Buddha was to renounce the highest possibilities of man, and descend to the passionless calm of some purely vegetative existence, which contemplated nothing, desired nothing, enjoyed nothing, feared nothing, expected nothing, suffered nothing; but the end set before the humblest follower of Jesus, was to think deeply, to desire the greatest uplifting, to master outward sorrow with a joy unspeakable, to triumph over illusion by reality, to suffer and die with the Christ, in blessed hope of beholding His glory, of being with Him and like Him for ever.

3. *The relation of both religions to the PAST.*

The Christ cannot be properly understood if no account be taken of the faith and hope of Israel, or of a pre-existent literature of unspeakable value,

The highest virtue according to Gautama and according to Christ contrasted.

Buddhist and Christian holiness contrasted.

The end of the Buddhist and the end of the Christian.

The relation of Christ to Israel.

Christ's relation to the scriptures of the Old Testament.

Buddha's relation to an older faith.

Oriental speculation about "the sorrow of the world."

Contending powers and forces.

which enshrined both. Christ's claim was founded upon the Old Testament Scriptures. He fulfilled the law and the prophets.

Buddha cannot be understood if it be not remembered that his entire career was coloured by the far-reaching influences of an older faith that he adopted, after he had freed them from some of the exclusive and national forms which they had assumed. As a philosopher he built upon the speculation of the older schools of thought, and as a great teacher he aimed to deliver mankind from the evil which earlier Hindû sages had recognized as appertaining to mundane life.

Long before the days of Gautama, "the sorrow of the world" and of man had pressed on the Oriental mind with terrific force. Speculation, following upon the simpler conceptions of the Vedic age, had led to a discrimination between the Supreme ATMAN, the breathing energy or subject of all thought, identified as it was with Brahma, the all-pervading force, the essence of all things, on the one hand, and on the other the plurality of existence and impermanence which was "not Atman," which had issued from his sense of loneliness and unrest. Men saw on all sides of them formless powers, chaotic forces contending with each other and with them. Death put on new and fearful aspects. As an enemy he did not spend his power in the one blow he struck at any

living thing. Unless men had propitiated these powers of destruction, they would be ceaselessly pursued in other worlds by the tyrant death, who would continuously smite down the new life which they would at each death assume. From the first there was commingled with the fear of metempsychosis, the hope and possibility of deliverance from it, but the fear itself produced a boundless, haunting dismay, verging on unutterable despair, which urged on both philosopher and priest to propound their remedies, to indicate the sacrifice, the ritual, the abstinence, the ascetic method by which this fearful entail of suffering might be cut off. To an Oriental it was supreme good if only he could be sure that he would sink at death once and for ever into the ocean of Being, and not be constrained by overwhelming fate to itinerate again and again the melancholy cycle of birth, disappointment, and death. He would have been content if only it had been appointed for him "once to die."

The need of propitiating the powers of destruction.

The "supreme good" of the Oriental

It was supposed that the only way of deliverance from the domain of death was unity of soul with the true mode of being, with Atman (Brahma). The soul must not dwell in the region of plurality, but must, in shuffling off the body, allow consciousness to be extinguished, and so put on the nature of Brahma himself. "The mode of action" (*Karma*) pursued here on earth was supposed to determine the course which the soul would pursue

The supposed way of deliverance from the domain of death.

Undisturbed
sleep the
image of
the highest
felicity.

from one state of being to another. Yet this form of moral retribution was not so much an open secret, as a profound mystery spoken by men of mark to each other. It was complicated by the distaste which the entire philosophy cast on action of any kind, good or evil. The infinite Brahma was above all characteristics, and the highest felicity for man was imaged in the depth of undisturbed sleep, when he loses all desire and all vision, and is beyond the reach of pleasure or pain. Sometimes these ancient teachers emphasized the obliteration of all desire, and at other times the possession of the knowledge that there is no finite self at all. Desire corresponds with ignorance of this highest reality, a knowledge of it corresponds with the extinction of desire.

Gautama
found the
problem
ready to his
hand, and
carried it
further than
the Brah-
minical
systems that
had gone
before.

So far Brahminical systems of thought had gone in the sixth century before Christ, and before Gautama began his meditations. This remarkable teacher found the problem ready to his hand, and pursued it further. He did not create the central ideas which he and his followers repeated with wearisome iteration. He gave a new and weird elevation to man, by removing out of his path and from the range of his contemplations the deities innumerable who were believed by his contemporaries to contribute to emancipation. The gods themselves were stamped for him with the character of impermanence and ignorance and

passion, and man was left alone to fight this tremendous battle with sorrow and death, by an attainment of a knowledge not yet secured by them.

At this point of our review, one of the superficial but startling resemblances in the evolution of Buddhism and Christian faith makes its appearance.

Buddha certainly took up the burning question of the existing schools of thought, and gave them as we shall see a new departure. He waved his hand over the mythologies and gods of the popular faith, and they disappeared into the formless chaos. He met the desires of men after the condition of freedom from the curse of existence, by reducing existence itself to non-existence, and by dispensing with all aid from the popular mythology. The differences between men, which made so startling a barrier between man and woman, between race and race, caste and caste, he theoretically disposed of, by reducing them all to insignificance.

Buddha's
new
departure.

He reduced
the differ-
ences
between
men to in-
significance.

Our Lord Jesus Christ initiated a new departure on ground already hallowed by Revelations of the Infinite One, but He did not effect this change by drawing an impenetrable veil over Jehovah's face, but by revealing the Father, by declaring that He in whom all live and have their being is Impartial Holiness and Eternal Love. He declared that He and the Father were one. He called upon men to believe in the Father as their Father. He assured men that the Lord of heaven and earth

Our Lord's
new
departure
was on
ground
hallowed by
previous
revelations.

He revealed
the Father
and de-
clared His
own unity
with Him.

God reveals
His secrets
to babes.

Self-sur-
render to
God's will
gives a man
to himself.

Christ gave
a new
meaning to
souls.

Buddha
turned
men's eyes
away from
the sorrows
of life;

Christ took
them away
by bearing
them.

The deaths
of Buddha
and Christ.

revealed the deepest secrets even to babes This was a truth that Buddha with his emphasis on the virtues of knowledge utterly missed. Moral surrender to a perfectly holy and loving will gave a man to himself. Not by under estimating the reality of self, but by conferring upon it an infinite value and significance, did Jesus free those who believed in Him from the greatest burden; not the burden of existence, but the burden of sin. Jesus Christ abolished distinctions, not by emphasizing the unreality of souls, but by investing all souls with a new meaning, which in itself was more to be desired than all the temporary and vanishing shadows of earthly greatness. Buddha turned men's eyes away from the sorrows of life. He would have men think them out of existence by a species of intellectual training. Christ took all our sorrows and sickness and death upon Himself, that He might take them away; and He pronounced His benediction on the poverty, the mourning, the hunger, the sorrow, the death, which are the handmaids to the soul, in its passage into the perfect life.

4. A further superficial resemblance between the Buddha and the Christ, is the prominence given in either system to the DEATH of the Founders. Throughout Buddhadom the death (commonly¹

¹ Dr. Rhys Davids. Doctrine of Nirvāna, *Buddhism*, pp. 110-123; and Hibbert Lectures, Lecture III.

though perhaps wrongly regarded as the *Nirvāna*) of Gautama is taken as the starting-point of the new faith. He had been the living Head of his disciples to whom all difficulties were referred, by whom the faithful were exhorted and directed in the smallest matters affecting their daily conduct or their mutual government, their dress, food, gesture, and minutest habit. His departure by death would naturally leave an awful blank. His death when it came was as sublime as that of Socrates, and through the various legends and amplifications of the narrative we can discern some of its real features. At a great age, having spent some fifty years in constant preaching and teaching, his mental faculties undimmed, he reached a grove outside *Kusinagāra*, and rested for the last time.

The death of Gautama the starting point of the Buddhist faith.

The sublimity of his death.

At the river, feeling that he was dying, he received food from his disciples, and promised them great reward in a future life for this act of piety. He spoke of his burial, and rules to be followed by his order. *Ananda* wept as he saw the end drawing near, and Gautama said,—

“O! *Ananda*, do not let yourself be troubled, do not weep. Have I not told you that we must part from all we hold most dear and pleasant? No being however born or put together can overcome the dissolution inherent in it; no such condition can exist. For a long time, *Ananda*, you have been very near to me by kindness in act and word and thoughtfulness. You have always done well; persevere, and you shall be quite free from the thirst of life, this chain of ignorance.” Afterwards he said, “You may perhaps be given to think ‘the word is ended now

His last words.

our Teacher is gone,' but you must not think so. After I am dead let the Law and the rules of the Order be a Teacher to you." "Mendicants, I now impress it upon you, the parts and powers of man must be dissolved; work out your own salvation with diligence."

His mental state as he passed away.

These were the last words spoken by Gautama Buddha. Studiously and stedfastly refusing to answer the question as to any personal continuity of his own being after death, and in a mental state of utter self-negation rather than of reconciliation with any power, or fate, or Being above him or beyond him, he passed away. He lived and died a Hindû, saturated with Hindû philosophy and ethic, yet giving to both a more practical form than they had already received. The company of his disciples never dreamed even of his resurrection in any form, material or etherial. So entirely had he realized his own ideal of knowledge, and the quenching of the thirst for life, that he believed that he was henceforth exempt from the curse of any further itineration of the cycle of birth and death. There were no elements of character (*Karma*) to be gathered once more into the form of man or *deva* or *nat* (angel). He had absolutely vanished. His body was burned on the funeral pile, and his ashes were distributed (according to the legend) among his celebrated followers of high rank. Topes, or mausolea were erected over them. The mendicant order he founded took fresh lease of life, and dating from his august departure, it took

No thought of his resurrection ever occurred to his disciples.

the form which has to some extent been observed to the present day.

His death was a notable event in the history of Buddhism, as the hour when a complete and final dissolution of the personality of Buddha took place. Buddha in death received final manumission from the servitude and cycle of change, the repetition of birth and death. Such repetition is the primal curse of all existent beings, but was evaded in his case by the cessation of every desire, and his perfect knowledge of the causes of suffering, and the way to escape from them. He is NOT, in any sense in which the idea of existence can be predicated by western mind. This is his crown of supreme glory. The moment when his knowledge obtained this lofty fruition of its interminable strife, was that from which Buddhodom originates. The method was revealed, the example given, the triumph secured. His objective death was the starting-point of a subjective immortality in the hearts of his followers. The absolute completeness of his death was, therefore, a reason for the highest satisfaction of his followers; and the aspect it assumes in the legends of many nations invests it with consummate interest.

His death the complete and final dissolution of Buddha's personality.

His objective death the starting point of a subjective immortality in the hearts of his followers.

The legends of China and Tibet expand and adorn the story of the death and cremation of Buddha, and help to show how entirely superficial is the resemblance between the deaths of Buddha

The death of the Son of God the re-commencement of His life in a position of supreme influence and power.

His death voluntary and sacrificial.

The perpetuity of His power and the continuity of His life manifested by His resurrection.

and of Christ, in their effects upon their respective followers. The death of the Son of God was an event which, by its stupendous importance, had an effect upon the whole universe, not by the cessation of His life and the close of His personality, but by the recommencement of that life in a position of supreme influence and actual power over heaven and earth. He proceeded to fill and rule all things. He not only vanquished death for Himself by voluntarily submitting to it, with accompaniments of inconceivable terror, though there was no inherent necessity for it, but He took away, by bearing it, the sting of death, which is sin, for all who appreciate and acquiesce in His redeeming love. His death did not proceed from the impermanence of the corporeity He bore, but was for the sins of the race whose nature He had voluntarily assumed. The perpetuity of His spiritual power and the continuity of His life was made manifest to men by the fact of His resurrection, and a new revelation was thus given to man of the nature of the spiritual body and of the eternal life.

Buddha persisted unto death in his belief that the final dissolution of his body closed for ever the career of individuality for himself, and opened up the way in which his followers might reach a similar consummation. Christ laid down His life that He might take it again, and convinced man-

kind that death was not the end, but rather the beginning of an endless life, not only for Himself but for all who love His appearing. So that though there are many superficial resemblances in the bearing of the death of Christ and that of Buddha upon their respective followers, these apparent resemblances are illusory in the extreme.

Christ's death the beginning of an endless life for all who love His appearing.

5. Another resemblance between the two systems is that both profess to rest upon a supreme law of life, which affects the entire universe. The DHARMA (or Dhamma) which is "the law" of Buddha occupies a place of high importance. Next to his own great personality in the esteem of his followers, is the "word" that he uttered for their guidance. To proclaim the discovery made by the sage, "to turn the wheel of the law," to insist upon "the four noble truths," and to press the moral injunctions involved in them, is the chief function of the disciples of Buddha. These "truths" do not simply affect human and contemporary life, but all life in all worlds, and in all the forms of existence, human and divine, angelic and animal, past, present, and future. They are not in themselves a cosmology or psychology, they involve no theory of the origin or end of things, or any philosophy of soul, as distinct from body, or any theological deliverance; and yet they lay the foundation for speculation on all these subjects, which the followers of Buddha are not slow to utilize.

The "law" of Buddha.

"The four noble truths" affect life in all worlds.

Perhaps the simplest form in which the more central teaching of Gautama can be presented, is preserved in the sermon preached by him at Benares, after he had received the great illumination under the *Bô-tree* and was recognized as *Buddha*.

THE FIRST TRUTH.

The sacred truth of suffering.

“This, oh monks, is the sacred truth of suffering : Birth is suffering, old age is suffering, sickness is suffering, death is suffering, to be united with the unloved is suffering, to be separated from the loved is suffering, not to obtain what one desires is suffering, the fivefold clinging to the earthly [*i.e.*, hankering after corporeal form, sensations, perceptions, conformations, and also after consciousness itself] is suffering.”

Impermanence the inexhaustible source of suffering.

The prevalence, the universal presence of thwarted desires, the fact of pain, the fact that wherever there are the conditions of self-consciousness in this or other worlds, there is pain—this is the “first truth.” Impermanence by itself is the inexhaustible source of suffering, and it is the indispensable condition of all that is. No thinker ever came to such an irrevocable judgment on the misery of existence in all worlds. The youth with his visions of bliss, the gorgeous insect fluttering in the sunbeam, the deva drinking his chalice of joy, the king on his throne, are all cherishing infinite delusion, if they do not see the near approach of suffering. Behind the sorrowful present lies a measureless sorrowful past, and an equally immeasurable future full of sorrows for him who does not put an end to sorrow.

The following most pathetic passage is quoted by Oldenberg from *Samyuttaka Nikaya* :

“The pilgrimage of beings has its beginning in eternity. No opening can be discovered from which proceeding creatures mazed in ignorance, fettered by a *thirst for being*, can stray and wander. What think ye, my disciples, whether is more—the water that is in the four great oceans, or the tears which have flowed from you while ye strayed and wandered on this long pilgrimage, and sorrowed and wept because that was your portion which ye abhorred, and that which ye loved was not your portion !”

The so-called gods are all bound by the chain of desire, and so are brought under the power of *Māra*.

“Man gathers flowers, his heart is set on pleasure, Death comes upon him like the floods of water on a village and sweeps him away.”

This perception of the poignant sorrow of the universe pervades Buddhist literature from end to end; not, however, in the sense of being reconciled or resigned to such fate, nor exactly in the spirit wherewith great Christian moralists have bewailed the misery of man, but rather in the tone of lofty pity for those who have not made the discovery.

The tone of Buddhist literature respecting the sorrow of the universe.

THE SECOND SACRED OR NOBLE TRUTH is *that of the origin of suffering*, and this Buddha has declared to be

The origin of suffering.

“the thirst (for being) which leads from birth to birth, together with lust and desire, which find gratification here and there, the thirst for pleasure and the thirst for power.”

THE THIRD SACRED TRUTH is that of

“the *extinction of suffering*; the extinction of this thirst by complete annihilation of desire, letting it go, expelling it, separating oneself from it, giving it no room.”

The extinction of suffering

The connection between the two truths.

Consciousness and corporeal form conditions of each other's activity.

The six fields.

Contact.

Sensation.

Thirst.

The connection between these two "truths" is difficult to seize, but is thus explained. Buddha himself named two links as preceding consciousness itself, but they are not easy to understand. Taking, however, bare consciousness of any individual as a starting-point he regarded corporeal form and name as an inevitable consequence of it, and he also laid it down that consciousness and corporeal form were reciprocal to each other,—mutual conditions of one another's activity. They lean upon one another, as two bundles of sticks mutually support each other. The death of one corporeal being sets the consciousness element free for the formation of another. The next links are as follows: from the *consciousness* and *corporeal form* come the six fields (*i.e.*, the five senses and the understanding), with their corresponding objects. From the six fields comes "*contact*," and from contact comes "*sensation*," [and in a strange way the old sage endeavoured to account for what we term "*perception*" and "*conception*;" but let this pass]—"from *sensation* arises *thirst*." It is this thirst and longing for sensation that leads to rebirth, the most fruitful cause of suffering, for from "*thirst*" comes "*clinging*." As flame clings to fuel, which can never be extinguished until the fuel is consumed, so the flame of our consciousness presses on from life to life, by transmigration, from earth to hell, from hells to heavens. The slightest clinging prevents deliver-

ance, and only by utter cessation of clinging is the soul delivered from sinful and suffering existence.

The question arises, Whence comes *consciousness*? It proceeds from KARMA (*Kamma Pali*), the moral retribution of the entire action of a man's past state. His ignorance in a previous birth of the consequences of his thirst and clinging, produces the conditions under which consciousness takes new name and (fresh) corporeal form in this present state of his being. This *Karma* forces, or forms, or reconstitutes being in the five regions of transmigration. It does not follow that men reappear as men, they may become animals, goblins, devas, gods. The glories of the heaven-life into which some men's karma causes a new individuality to enter, are dazzling or satisfying. Dread and ghastly is the agony of the hells into which the karma of others causes other individualities to appear. It would seem as if the thirst for rebirth in some particular form of being had also (on Buddhist theory) to do with the result; but it may and must happen that by securing any form of new birth, the soul is still chained and fettered by the miserable cycle that it has to itinerate. The extinction of the thirst which leads to the propagation and perpetuation of life, the annihilation of the clinging, is the only way of obtaining deliverance from the misery of existence.

The source of consciousness.

The re-constitution of being by Karma in the five regions of transformation.

The extinction of thirst the only way of obtaining deliverance from the misery of existence.

THE FOURTH SACRED TRUTH teaches the *path*

The path
to the
extinction
of suffering.

to the extinction of suffering, the method by which Buddhist teachers have expanded the fundamental ideas of their founder. The path includes :—

- (1) Right belief (views).
- (2) Right feelings (or resolves).
- (3) Right actions.
- (4) Right living (or mode of livelihood).
- (5) Right exertion (or endeavour).
- (6) Right thought (or memory).
- (7) Right meditation (or self-concentration).

These paths, blending into one, are continually illustrated by parable, dialogue, fable, apologue, and by the numberless stories of Buddha, not only while passing through the final stage of his existence, but in hundreds of previous existences, during which his Karma was dwindling, and the necessity of a further rebirth gradually becoming annihilated.

Five pro-
hibitions.

This code is moreover re-shaped for practical use in the form of FIVE PROHIBITIONS: (1) to kill no living thing; (2) to lay no hand on the property of another; (3) not to touch another's wife; (4) not to speak what is untrue; (5) not to drink intoxicants. These prohibitions, four of which closely correspond with the law of the second table of the decalogue, are interpreted to mean far more than the bare restraint from some definite action. The first leads to most careful avoidance of any known sacrifice of life, and is probably based upon

The
significance
of the pro-
hibitions.

the increment of suffering involved in the origination of a new life, not on the sanctity of life itself. As far as human life is concerned, it is made to cover much that was expressed in our Lord's interpretation of the sixth commandment. The second injunction corresponds with the seventh commandment, and as far as monks are concerned prohibits all sexual intercourse whatever. The strongest emphasis is laid upon the spirit of forgiveness and abstinence from enmity and calumnious conversation, on extinction of impure thought and desire, and on meekness in receiving cruel wrong.

The spirit of forgiveness, etc., emphasised.

It must be carefully noted that the duties of the moral code are confined entirely to those of the second table; and that there are no hints of the principle of love to others, save as the expression of the desire to surmount and extinguish all desire, including desire for the welfare of others. There is no room in this method of deliverance for the little child or the guilty sinner; nor is there the faintest hint of help from any higher source than self to enable the strongest spirit to attain even the mysterious rest which is set forth as the highest hope of mankind.

No hints of the principle of love to others.

No hint of help from any higher source.

The moral precepts which are embodied in Buddhism simply correspond with those which are found in the earliest teaching of Hinduism, and of the Egyptian, Chinese, and Parsi moralists, and must not claim to be the special patrimony

The moral precepts not the special patrimony of Buddha

They are anterior to special revelation in the Scriptures, accompanied with principles and motives and connected with powers which lift men into harmony with them.

of Buddha. They are older and deeper than any civilization, and anterior to all special revelation, written or unwritten. They are enshrined in the decalogue, and in the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ; but in both these revelations they are accompanied with principles and motives, and associated with powers which lift man into harmony with them.

It is not by any means clear how the thirst of the soul can be annihilated by these paths of moral obedience, or by any recognition of the universality of suffering.

The contrast between the Gospel of Christ's salvation and the law of Buddha's deliverance is so great that words cannot measure it. The moral culture which schools the mind into utter passivity and indifference to all things and persons is the very antipodes of the spiritual culture which loves and blesses all the works of God, which embraces all souls, and is reconciled to the Supreme Will.

The moral culture of Buddhism the very antipodes of the spiritual culture of Christianity.

Misery, rather than sin, is the evil supposed to be explained by the theory of KARMA. Moral suicide, not of the bodily life, but of the very possibility of reconstruction, and consequent deliverance from the misery of existence is the great achievement of the Buddhist *régime*.

Misery, not sin, the evil to be explained by Karma.

It is obvious that the terrible evil of transmigration, which was accepted by the Oriental mind as beyond the range of scepticism or question,

was a very real and haunting terror. Although the idea of conscious continuity of being after death, or any remembrance of a previous existence, was ignored, if not categorically denied by Buddha, and although the Brahminical conception of ultimate absorption and loss of personality in the Supreme Self, in Brahma, ceased to influence his mind or affect his disciples, yet he could not divest himself or them of the fact of transmigration. So he sought to reconcile the two notions, the old ancestral creed with his idea of deliverance; and he did so, by supposing that every form of evil in this and other worlds, in heaven and hell, is the outcome or karma of the life lived previously by some unenlightened being who had not pursued the paths of deliverance. There were four of these paths or stages of the path which were enumerated.

Transmigration a haunting terror.

Buddha's reconciliation of the ancestral creed with his idea of deliverance.

(1) *Conversion*, or entering on the stream in which a man becomes free from the delusion of self, from doubt as to Buddha himself, from confidence in mere rite and ceremony. Even this first stage is better than universal empire, better than the prolongation of conscious life in heaven.

Beginning of freedom from the delusion of self.

(2) *The path of those who will only return to the world once more* is secured by those who have reduced to a minimum lust, hatred, and delusion. Even if there be this minimum of clinging to the sources of all misery,—one new life here will await them.

The path of those who reduce lust, hatred, and delusion to a minimum, who will only return to the world once more.

The path of those in whom all self seeking and wrong feeling are extinguished.

(3) *The path of those who will never return to this world* is one in which all desire for self or wrong feeling for others is extinguished, and at death their *karma* may produce some being in some of the upper worlds.

The path of the veritable saint.

(4) *The final path of the veritable saint*, or ARHAT, is that which has lost even the faintest clinging to existence, or feeblest desire for it, in this or other worlds, and absolute freedom from all pride, self-righteousness, and ignorance.

Nirvana of the absolute peace and rest of the ARHAT.

This condition of mind and state of will into which a man is brought by these saintly processes is, according to Oldenberg, Rhys Davids, and others, NIRVANA. In defining the term, they maintain that it is *not* the condition into which God or man is brought after dissolution; it is not the synonym for "heaven;" it is not the equivalent for annihilation; but it is the term which denotes the absolute peace and rest of the ARHAT, *before* the mystery of the grave is faced. Numerous passages are quoted from the Suttas, in which *Nirvāna* is promised to the devotee who has conquered sin by holiness, who has become utterly free from desire, and so it is set forth as the *extinction of the sinful grasping condition of mind and heart which would otherwise be the cause of another individual existence*. It is a blowing out of the fires of lust, anger, ignorance, and selfishness. It is the *perfect peace*. When an Arhat has reached this exalted state before

death, he still retains the *Skandhas* as they are called, the bodily functions and powers, the issue of the sins of his previous existences in other individualities. When death supervenes, these skandhas—being transitory—pass away, and there is no more construction of an individuality in this or any other world. The “Karma” of untold lives is dissolved.

The Arhat who has perfect peace before death still retains the bodily functions and powers.

It is probable that the idea expressed by the term *Skandha* (the bodily functions and attributes and consequent powers) included that in which these inhered, the “form” at least which has held them together, and which remains even after they are scattered in the funeral pyre.

What the term Skandha, (bodily functions and powers) includes.

The later books gave the name of *Boddhisattwa*, to those Arhats who had only one more life to live in this world. The heaven to which *Maya*, the mother of Buddha, had gone at death, was one to which it was believed by supernatural trance Buddha had ascended, and where he held communion with her.

The Boddhisattwa.

The heaven of *Maya* whither Buddha went.

Such a conception seems to allow that there was a continuity of existence and consciousness possible to Buddhist saints, believed in even within the orthodox communion, and among austere sects of the ancient faith. The Rev. Spence Hardy and Mgr. Bigandet strongly maintain the utter nihilism of the *Nirvâna* of Buddha himself. Burnouf and others confirm the same view, though they suggest that *Gautama*

Continuity of existence and consciousness regarded as possible to Buddhist saints.

The spread of the formula of annihilation.

Dr. Rhys Davids' explanation.

Buddha's dogmatism and agnosticism.

The peace of the Buddhist and the peace of the Christian

is the last mighty spirit that has reached this *summum bonum*. It seems incredible to us that a formula of utter annihilation could ever have made the extraordinary progress that it did among peoples who at least believed in an absorption into the supreme self and eternal essence, and a transmigration which did not repudiate the idea of soul. Dr. Rhys Davids seems to think that the passion of universal benevolence involved in the closing up of one only of the hitherto endless sources of misery was sufficient motive for entering on the path to Nirvâna, even though the Buddhist disciple should hereafter be unconscious of the advantage he had conferred upon the universe by his non-existence.

The safest method of understanding the problem, is to separate the question of Nirvâna from that of the continuity of the soul. Buddha was a supreme dogmatist on the nature of true peace, and an extreme Agnostic as to the future life. He would suffer no disciple to deviate a hair-breadth from the path to Nirvâna, but he repudiated all logical inferences drawn from the essential nature of Nirvâna. No wonder that the idea of Nirvâna did in after days develop into the conception of Paradise, whether this latter was due to Christian influences or not.

There is a superficial resemblance between the sacred peace of the Buddhist saint and that of the sanctified follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, who

has lost his own will in the will of God. But the Christian believer is never so conscious of and aware of his own existence as when he loses it in Christ's. Faith at its best is union with Christ, but it is the union of a member with a body. The "I" and "thou" are not abolished relations. Perfect love casts out fear, but the distinction between the object and subject of a supreme affection will endure for ever. "Eternal life," by the very form and inner meaning of the idea, is the logical contradictory of Nirvâna.

The Christian united to Christ as a member to a body.

Eternal life the logical contradictory of Nirvana

Buddhist peace is the obliteration of desire; Christian peace the refinement and satisfaction of desire. The Buddhist saint conquers all his longings and regrets; the Christian exclaims, "My earnest expectation and desire are that Christ may be magnified in my body whether by life or death." The peace of the Christian flows from, and is the result of, reconciliation and acceptance with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

The source of the peace of the Christian.

6. There is a striking external resemblance between the Society (Church) founded by our Lord, and the Society (*Sangha*) originated by Gautama Buddha. These resemblances are most of all conspicuous in the complicated hierarchy of the Papal Church, and a multitude of religious orders pledged to a more or less rigid loyalty to its principles and precepts.

Points of similarity between the society of Buddha and the Church.

The history of the "Society" or "Order," or "Assembly" of Buddha, offers a bewildering similarity to some of the aspects of Christendom; so that writers customarily speak of the "Church," the "Councils," the "Canons," "the Sacred Books," the "Priesthood," the "Monasteries," the "Monks and Nuns," the "Pilgrims" the "Patriarchs" and "Pontiffs," the "Missioners," the "Heretical sects," the "Cathedrals," of Buddhodom. Rosaries are used by the monks and nuns to assist them to recite their meditations and praises. Incense is offered to sacred images of the greatest Buddha, as well as to some of the anticipated Buddhas of the future. A kind of divinity is honoured, consisting of "the three precious ones"—the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, *i.e.*, I. The Buddha. II. His law or word. III. The society which embodies his principles and spirit.

The resemblances conceal the radical divergence of principle between the two.

These and many other details of external resemblance to Christian institutions conceal the radical divergence between their respective principles. The resemblances are not in the fundamental elements of thought or feeling, but in the laws which regulate all human society, and are evolved more or less wherever ideas form the nucleus of association on a great scale. Christianity in her essence cannot be credited with the whole history of the institutions which have been developed by her adherents. The enormous variety

of these institutions finds some parallels in the different development which the Buddhistic "Church" has suffered in the various oriental countries through which these ideas have spread.

Buddhism, moreover, like Christianity, has taken hold in its passage from land to land of ideas that are foreign to its origin, but which have received such vast expansion and exercised so great a hold upon the Oriental mind, that they cannot be ignored in any estimate of this extraordinary form of religious organization.

A brief sketch of this history and of this society must here be attempted.

On the occurrence of Buddha's death his disciples, scattered over many parts of India, according to tradition, assembled to the number of 500 at Rajagriha, and proceeded to regulate, in harmony with what they believed to be their master's word, the principles of faith and order to be hereafter observed by the society, and to make an authentic text of his sayings. They professed only to recite what they had heard from the lips of the exalted one, and they called on all new adherents to "take refuge" in Buddha, in his doctrine, and in his order. At first they were all mendicant monks who were centres of spiritual power in their own neighbourhood, but who perpetually moved from place to place (except during the rainy season). They had not the cohesion

Ideas foreign to their origin assimilated by both systems.

Rules of the Buddhist society formulated at Buddha's death.

Text of his sayings.

Migratory character of the mendicant disciples of Buddha.

Differing rules adopted by various synods.

Rapid increase of numbers.

Qualifications of candidates.

of early Christian churches, which from the Apostolic age attached themselves to particular localities, and thus became the centres of missionary expansion, and the larger units of a new brotherhood. The mendicant disciples of Buddha were continually changing their place of abode, and the small gatherings of them were never the same. Consequently they differed among each other as to the precise rules they were called upon to adopt. One synod of disciples differed from another synod, and the greatest confusion prevailed. Patriarchal authority, to take the place of Gautama's, did not emerge in India, though special deference was probably paid to those who were known to have been the associates and personal friends of the great sage. But the number of those who sought to enter the paths leading to Nirvâna multiplied daily, and the initiation into the society closely corresponded with the rules by which a Brahmin devoted himself to an ascetic life.

Candidates were to protest themselves free from leprosy, goître, consumption, and epilepsy. What a contrast is this to the fellowship which accepted and healed the leper, and cast out the devil! How bitter the confession that there was no deliverance possible for some, and those the most needy of mankind! They had, moreover, to show that they were twenty years of age, were possessed of alms-bowl and garments, and were willing to submit to the

rules. These were (1) that they should feed only on morsels secured by begging; (2) that their clothes should be constructed of rags which they collected; (3) that their bed should be under the trees of the forest; (4) that medicine should be the urine of cattle; (5) that all sexual intercourse should be absolutely suspended; (6) that all theft, even to a blade of grass, should be repudiated; (7) that no life should be taken, not even that of a worm or an ant.

Rules to be submitted to.

These austere rules were binding upon the ordained monk so long as he chose. But a monk might return to the world, if conscious of any longing even for father, wife, or friend, and there would then be an end of his hope of deliverance; but so long as he was called a Bhikkhu, he accepted poverty as absolutely as the disciples of St. Francis did in after days. The monk did not look in vain from the benevolent for food, clothing, or medicine for the sick. The "order" of Buddha did not, like the mediæval monks of the West, cultivate the ground, nor did they accumulate property.

A monk might return to the world

Negligence in outer appearance and personal defilement were condemned. The rags sewn together for garments were to be washed and dyed; and Buddha did not refuse his mendicants the comfort of wearing robes when freely given them, or receiving food if offered them in the houses of the laity. The austerity

Mitigations of the austerity of the rules.

must consequently in many cases have been softened.

Monasteries. *Viharas* or monasteries were erected by well-wishers, where many conveniences were provided for the "order," especially in the rainy season. Many of the sacred books are occupied with the rules for the ascetic life pressed into the most insignificant detail, and fortified by some narrative or apologue, or solemn advice on the subject supposed to have been uttered by the "exalted one," or by one or other of his most venerable associates.¹

Worship. The "worship" of the Buddhist monks was profoundly different from that which prevails in every other ancient faith. The entire process is one of self-concentration. In the depth of each consciousness the conflict and the victory must take place. Buddha had passed into Nirvâna, and at all events into absolute separation from his disciples.

Self-concentration.

No sense of his spiritual presence was allowed to haunt their minds. On fast days mutual confession was enjoined upon the "order," under most solemn circumstances. These confessions occurred once a fortnight, and degradation of rank followed any

Fortnightly confessions.

¹ A vast storehouse of information from the Sanscrit authorities as to the Vinaya, or discipline, may be found in Burnouf, *Introduction à l'Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien*, pp. 233-437; in Spence Hardy's *Eastern Monachism*; and in Dr. R. Davids' translations from the *Kullavagga*, *Patimokha*, and *Mahavagga*. Sacred Books of the East, vols. xiii. and xvii.

admission of having violated the standing rules. Once a year all the members, summoned to some particular *vihara* (or monastery), were accustomed severally to ask their reverend brethren whether any of them had seen, heard, or suspected on the part of each anything inconsistent with their profession.

Yearly
scrutiny of
character.

In very early days they taught each other especially to visit and venerate the four holy places: (*a*) where Gautama was born, (*b*) where he received the highest illumination, (*c*) where he set in motion "the wheel of the law," and (*d*) where he entered into Nirvâna; and so a door was opened for the worship of other relics, and the deterioration of the faith.

Prescribed
visits to
holy places.

An order of *nuns* was formed, and commanded to follow closely the rules which were imposed on monks. The striking peculiarity discriminating it from Christian Monasticism, is the utterly inferior rank and kind of holiness supposed to be secured by woman, as compared with man. The most rigid separation of the monks and nuns from each other was enjoined. The number of nuns was never great. As H. Oldenberg observes, "The thoughts and forms of life of Buddhism had been thought out and moulded solely by men and for men."

Order of
nuns
instituted

Inferior
rank of
woman.

The existence of these orders of monks and nuns in vast numbers implied that there was an outside world which recognized the virtue of such religious persons was ready to furnish them with the food

Inference
from the
numbers of
monks and
nuns

and raiment for which they silently asked, and in various ways to contribute to their comfort. Upon this laity also were urged the moral rules of the order, and for many generations the adherents must have been very numerous. How far they blended this new faith with their old Hinduism is not clear. A hundred years after the first council of five hundred disciples, a second was held at *Vaisali*, where certain ceremonial indulgences were instituted, and where great difference of opinion began to prevail as to the number and nature of the sacred books, and the degree of austerity necessary to secure the highest end of their calling.

Institution of ceremonial indulgences at the Council at Vaisali.

Differences of opinion.

About the time of Alexander's invasion of Asia, the political changes then going on in the peninsula led to the elevation of one race to the highest political eminence. A man who appears to be known in Greek history as Sandracottus (*Chandragupta*), seized the hegemony of the Indian royalties, and founded a dynasty at *MAGADHA*, almost geographically coincident with the district now known as *Oude*. The third successor of *Chandragupta*, *Piyadasi* by name, under the honorific title of *Asoka* became a devout Buddhist, and performed prodigies of zeal for the diffusion, protection, and defence of the faith. He is at once the Constantine, the Theodosius, the Charlemagne of *Buddhadom*, and his name is honoured from *Mongolia* to *Ceylon*. The adventitious aid thus

Asoka's conversion to Buddhism and his propagation and defence of it.

afforded by the secular power to a spiritual order was "the first step on its downward path, and to its expulsion from India." Asoka provided *dagobas* for the relics of Buddha, monasteries and material help of all kinds, proclaimed edicts, and engraved them on pillars which are still to be found in Delhi, Allahabad, near Peshawr, and at Babra. These monuments have been explored by a race of scholars, showing that the Buddhism of Asoka's time in the main urged the simple morality of the earliest discourses of Buddha, enjoined obedience to parents, kindness to children, mercy to animals, reverence to Brahmins and to the order, suppression of anger and lust, and the exercise of tolerance and charity. A noble sentence occurs in Edict vi., on the Delhi pillar:—

The aid of the secular power the first step to its expulsion from India.

The teaching of the Buddhism of Asoka's time.

"I pray with every variety of prayer for those who differ from me in creed, that they following my proper example may with me attain unto eternal salvation."

Asoka called the Council of Patna, where 1000 principal members of the order were assembled. These determined the canon of the sacred books.

The Council of Patna.

One of the most eventful consequences of this council was the despatch of missionaries to distant regions, to proclaim the method of "deliverance," secured by Buddha from the miseries of the universe. The names of the most renowned of these missionaries are preserved. We find they went—among other outlying districts—to Ceylon.

The despatch of missionaries to distant regions.

King
Asoka's son
sent to
Ceylon.

An order
of nuns
instituted
there.

Thither King Asoka's own son *Mahinda* was sent between 250 and 230 B.C., and there he translated the canon into the vernacular of the island. The king of Ceylon was willing to receive the mission, and erected dagobas over relics of Buddha, and monasteries for the order. The sister of Mahinda accompanied him, and there instituted with like enthusiasm an order of nuns. A portion of the Bô-tree which she planted is still growing, the *oldest historic tree in the world*. It was in Ceylon that for the first time about 88 B.C. the *three pitakas* (baskets, or collection of treatises) were reduced to a *written* form. They had been preserved in the memories of successive generations, just as for centuries the Mishna and Gemaras were held in the memories of the Rabbis, and as to the present day, the Vedas, and the Canon of Hebrew Scripture, and the rabbinical comments on the oral and written word, could be verbally recovered from those whose sole function it is ceaselessly to recite them.

The original
Bible of
Buddha-
dom.

The re-translation into the old sacred language of Mahinda's Sinhalese version of the three groups of treatises constitutes the *Tri-pitaka*, or "three baskets" -- the original BIBLE of Buddhodom. They are accessible in part to European readers in the translations by Gogerly, Max Müller, E. Burnouf, Rhys Davids, and others.

The part taken by Ceylonese Buddhists corresponds with the work done for Christian literature by the scholars of Alexandria and Cæsarea. The faith has preserved its pristine form in Ceylon and Burmah more obviously than it did in India itself. The most imposing event in the history of the faith is that which, about the time of the Christian era, transmitted it to China. The particular form of it which took that great departure, differs in some essential features from that which became classic and sacred in Ceylon, and which is represented in the Pali literature.

The transmission of Buddhism to China.

A grave difference of judgment which prevailed at the Patna Council, on the extent of the Canon of Sacred Books and on the rules of the Order, led to the formation of many discordant sects. These may be roughly regarded in the main as *two*, and characterized (*a*) as the followers of the "Little Vehicle," *Hinayana*; and (*b*) the adherents of *Mahayana*, or the "Great Vehicle." This distinction took its nomenclature from another great council of Buddhists, held about the time of the Christian era, under the direction of Kanishka, the then ruler of Kashmir. One line of demarcation between the two schools was that whereas the *Hinayana*—or the books alone known to the southern Buddhists—were written in Pali, the books of the "Great Vehicle" were more

Differences about the Canon of Sacred Books originated various sects.

Line of demarcation between the two main schools—the followers of the "Little Vehicle" and the adherents of the "Great Vehicle."

Controversy
as to the
relative
antiquity of
the two
Vehicles.

numerous, and were written in Sanscrit.¹ A controversy, resembling that between advocates of the longer and shorter recensions of the letters of Ignatius, has prevailed as to the relative antiquity of the two Vehicles. The general opinion of scholars is that the Pali documents undoubtedly contain the most venerable and primitive traditions and sayings of Buddha, but the great expansive energies of Buddhism which have enabled it to hold in its embrace the vast populations of China, and the extraordinary subsequent accretions to the faith in Tibet and Nepal, have taken their origin in the *Great Vehicle* and the Sanscrit literature. The great contest between Confucianism and Buddhism turned on the fact that the latter reinforced the moral precepts common to them both, with motives drawn from a future life, the rewards of virtue, the punishment of transgression. The Confucianist declared these to be illusory and ignoble; the Buddhists maintained them to be rational and worthy. But if Buddha himself were supposed

Chinese,
Tibetan, and
Nepalese
Buddhism
originated
in the
"Great
Vehicle."

The contest
between
Confucian-
ism and
Buddhism.

¹ The two most celebrated Sanscrit Books are (1) the *Lalita Vistara*, which has been cried up as the most precious memorial of the early Buddhism by some writers, *e.g.*, M. St. Hilaire and Mr. Lilly. Dr. Davids argues (Hibbert Lectures, pp. 197, ff.) that the first certain proof of its existence is the Tibetan translation of it in the sixth century A.D. There may be Chinese translations much earlier, this is not proved; (2) the *Prájna Paramita*, the great metaphysical treatise, analyzed by Burnouf pp. 438, ff., exhibits the later development of the Buddhist doctrine.

to have passed into utter non-continuity of being, and *Nirvâna* meant for them the state of mind from which no *karma* could henceforth entrain the elements of consciousness into corporeal form; the future life is an impossibility, and its power to influence the moral judgments infinitesimal.¹

The *Mahayana* treatises (whether *Vinaya*, *Sutra*, or *Abidharma*), however highly they estimate Buddha, introduce a new and enormous development of thought by describing the character, home, enjoyment, and power of the great *Bodddhi-sattwas*—beings, that is, who reached the condition of *Arhat* on earth, and having died, await a final birth into this world. There is the germ of this mythological expansion in the *Pali* books; and in some southern temples, worship or honour is given to *Maitreya*, the Buddha of the future; but as early as 400 A.D. *Fahian*, the great Chinese pilgrim to the holy land of *Buddhadom*, finds the homage to *Manjusri* and *Avalokiteswara* all but universal. Great discussion prevailed in the north-western provinces of *India*, as to the nature of soul itself. The purest and strongest idealism began to prevail. "All things that exist result from the

The new and great development in the *Mahayana* treatises.

Discussions about the soul.

The prevalence of idealism.

¹ The history of Chinese Buddhism may be read in *Beal's Chinese Buddhism*, and *Dr. Edkins' work* on the same subject; also in *Beal's Introduction to the Travels of Fahian and Hiouen Thsang* and *Vie de Hiouen Thsang*, translated into French by *M. Stanislas Julien*.

heart," they said. "All things material are empty." "All things are just what the mind reports them." Such formulæ must have made havoc of the doctrine of the negation of soul, and opened the way to boundless speculation. World upon world was fabled where these mighty Boddhi-sattwas ruled, as "Supreme wisdom," "Visual power," "Perfect holiness," and the like.

Fabled
worlds.

The most impressive and far-reaching effect was produced among the northern Buddhists by the supposed AMITABHA. Amitabha was said to preside in a world far away to the west, where all the conditions are different from those in this world. No transmigration there introduces its endless dance. The precious metals and gems abound. Thousands of Buddhas dwell there in royal peace. Amitabha ("boundless age") has been living there for a practical eternity. Two great Boddhi-sattwas aid him in saving multitudes of living beings, who are born on their death into the paradise of his presence.

The world
presided
over by
Amitabha.

His saving
work.

This is only one of many similar imaginations, which fill up the arctic void left by the agnostic utterances of Gautama, and the arid speculations of the Sanscrit metaphysics. The very terms in which the Sutras express these tropical conceptions show that their inventions were allegorizing and romancing to an extreme degree; but the form of Buddhism which China has accepted, and which

Allegorizing
and
romancing
character of
these
inventions.

prevails to the present day is saturated with these ideas. This is most significant, and proves that the nihilism and intellectual self-sufficiency of the southern Buddhism has succumbed before the conception of personal continuity and of something akin to Divine grace.

Chinese Buddhism saturated with these ideas.

Significance of the fact.

One of the most affecting indications of the progress of the ideas of the Great Vehicle in China, is the fact that when in the seventh century A.D., Hiouen Thsang, the greatest of the Chinese pilgrims, was drawing near his end, his most exalted hope was that in consequence of the extent of his sacrifices, and the excellence of his work, he might be born into the palace and home where Maitreya, the Buddha of the future, dwells in light and glory and serene contemplations. The thick darkness of Nirvâna shimmers with the phantasms of imaginary paradises.

The dying desire of the greatest of the Chinese pilgrims.

There is little dispute that *Manjusri* is addressed in prayer as the enlightener of the world. He may or may not be identifiable with a great mendicant, who introduced Buddhism into Nepal. This missionary is looked upon as especially connected with the origination of the school of thought which issued in the "Great Vehicle." Perfect wisdom is undoubtedly attributed to him, and he is worshipped as God; while *Avalokiteswara*, "the Lord who looks down from on high," is the spirit of the Buddhas present in the community. Fourteen

The worship of Manjusri.

hundred years ago, he was addressed in prayer by Fahian with as much fervour as Indra or Siva is approached now by a devout Hindu.

The worship
of
Kwan-yin.

Another Boddhi-sattwa of immense popularity, adored through many provinces of China, etc., Mongolia and Tibet is *Kwan-yin*, "The infinite mercy." He is represented as a female figure holding in her arms a child, and certainly suggesting the idea that some semi-Christian influences may have moulded this form of modern Buddhism. However foreign this idea may be to the calm passionless agnosticism of earlier days, the vast majority of those who honour the name of Buddha have created a pantheon rich in personal characteristics, in objects of practical worship, and of fanatic idolatry. They have thus met the demands of the outraged human heart, by forming vague and distorted images of One who fills all things, all worlds, and all time with His presence.

The counter-
parts of the
mortal
Buddhas in
a super-
sensual
world.

A further late development of the Great Vehicle has exerted a vast influence on the popular mind. It amounts to this, that every mortal Buddha, down to the last, viz., Gautama, and the next, supposed to be Maitreya, has his counterpart or type of a Boddhi-sattwa in a super-sensual world. Thus Avalokiteswara is the great source or type of Gautama, and he again is the emanation of what was called a Dhyâni Buddha, in a still wider and loftier and purer region. Thus the Dhyâni

Buddha of Avalokiteswara, is Amitâbha, "the boundless age," or the "immeasurable light;" and there is the threefold unity of Amitâbha, Avalokiteswara and Gautama, to satisfy the longing of the worshipper for something more trustworthy than the annihilated man. Moreover, faith in Amitâbha is the grand instrument by which man may rise into the blessedness which he gives.

A portion of the Tibetan community, about the tenth century, A.D., resolved all the Dhyâni-Buddhas of the infinite past and of innumerable worlds into a unity, and spoke of the Supreme Buddha, the ADI-BUDDHA, who corresponds with the ultimate Divine Essence of the Gnostic schools, and from whom all emanations of life, human, angelic, prenatal, archetypal, and divine, have sprung.

The supreme
Buddha
of the
Tibetan
community.

In dealing therefore with Buddhahood as a concrete whole, it must be granted that among some of its disciples the conception of the supreme source of all being is recognised and worshipped.

Buddhism has suffered another development of extraordinary power in the country of *Tibet*. Here the ideas of Buddha were from the first associated with the thought of the great Bodhisattwa, Avalokiteswara, who was present by his spirit in the community of the faithful. In Tibet he was believed to reside especially in the most distinguished of them, and to take up his abode in

The great
Bodhi-
sattwa
Avalokite-
swara.

The Pope of
Buddhadom.

the chief pontiff or patriarch of their church, whom they called DALAI-LAMA. In him, the veritable Pope of Buddhadom, the ADI-BUDDHA is supposed to be incarnated. Long and stormy has been the conflict among rival claimants to this high position. His history is a striking parody upon that of the Pontifical See of Christendom. In the occupant of this blasphemous rank, that of God upon earth, is vested perpetually the supreme temporal power. The worship, the ceremonial, the ecclesiastical orders strangely correspond with those of the Roman Church.

The literary
treasures of
Tibet.

The researches of Csoma-de-Köros, of the two Schlaginweits, of Köppen, Mr. Rockhill and others, show that we have much to learn from the still unexplored literary treasures of Tibet. These consist of thousands of translations and commentaries upon the Sanscrit books, which deal with the life of Buddha, with the founding and nature of his order, and with the metaphysics of the schools. Many strange customs have been invented in Tibet, which have travelled thence into Mongolia,¹ by which the religious duties of the faithful may be expedited. The sacred biographies, rules of conduct and prayers, are inscribed on rolls and placed in cylinders, which are capable of being turned by the hand of the willing worshipper. He is told that by assisting these praying

Customs
originated
in Tibet.

¹ Gilmour, *Among the Mongols.*

cylinders to revolve, he acquires the merit of having perused the literature, or offered the prayers thus inscribed. More than this, the machinery is not infrequently set in motion by windmills, which thus greatly cheapen the merit of all who share in their erection !

It is impossible to trace the utter decadence and disappearance of Buddhist faith in the land of its origin. But about the seventh century, the Brahminical order and the civil power utterly crushed or expelled the Buddhist system and profession from India. For a while the two forms of faith must have existed side by side, as the ruins around Benares and Delhi, and the caves of Ellora prove. Even the mythology of Brahmins regarded Buddha as one of the Avatars of Vishnu, though the Buddhists themselves are spoken of with malice and contempt.

The Jains of Western India represent probably an analogous movement to that which was inaugurated by Gautama, and their sect was probably swollen during the persecutions of the tenth and eleventh centuries by refugees from the old body. When the Chinese pilgrim visited India in the seventh century, he saw in many places but the remnant of what was once a flourishing community, and three hundred years later it had utterly vanished. It may be we trace the echoes of its influence in the Bhagavad Gita, in the

Decadence
of Buddhism
in India.

The move-
ment repre-
sented by
the Jains of
Western
India
analogous
to that
inaugurated
by Gautama.

worship of Jaganath,¹ and in the speculations of some of the schools of Hindu philosophy.

Buddhadom
a simula-
crum of
Christendom

The birth-
place of
Buddhism
desecrated.

In Ceylon it
exists in its
most ancient
form.

Pontifical
development
in Tibet.

Buddhism has assumed other shapes in Japan and Siam, in the Tartar kingdoms, and in the modern life of Burmah and Ceylon. We can without difficulty discern in this brief outline of Buddhadom, a most impressive simulacrum of Christendom. We see the place of its origin desecrated and trampled upon by strangers, we discern its most antique and veritable form in active and energetic exercise in the great island of Ceylon. There its nihilism and its atheism are the orthodox faith. There Buddha is venerated as the saint, than whom among Gods or men there hath not risen a greater; but even in Ceylon we see that its disciples have been able to blend it with magic and aboriginal deva-worship of the island. In India, among the Jains, it has blossomed into a portentous mythology; throughout China it has blended with the man-homage of the middle kingdom, and the religious nature inherent in man has allowed the mists of Nirvâna to wreath themselves into the apocalyptic splendours of the paradise of Amitâbha. In Tibet it has developed a pontifical system, with a group of cardinals, and a splendour of mystery and ritual rivalling the most imposing functions of the Vatican. In Japan, coupled with a larger element

¹ William Erskine, *Remains of Buddhists in India*, Literary Transactions of Bombay Society, Vol. III.

of the old nature worship, it has inspired religious practices, revival services at which thousands of ecstatic devotees cry out for the mercy of Amitâbha. Buddhism on a stupendous scale has occupied the thoughts, stimulated the speculations, and to some extent satisfied the craving of mankind.

Its influence
in Japan.

Where its first principles have been most widely departed from, as in Tibet, there some very close resemblance to the Roman Catholic doctrine, order, and ritual, arrests attention. The real resemblances to ecclesiastical, not primitive Christianity, are deviations from its ideal and from its orthodoxy. The fancied and superficial resemblances do, on closer inquiry, reveal essential differences.

Resembles
Roman
Catholicism
most where
it has most
widely
departed
from its
first
principles.

A few words finally on *the antithesis and fundamental differences between Buddhism and Christianity*.

Contrast
with
Christian-
ity.

The most essential divergence between the two systems is seen (*a*) in the *nature* and *object* of worship. The earliest informants to which we can appeal, the portions of the Tri-pitaka in the Pâli canon, including the (Sutras) discourses of Gautama, while they heap in Oriental hyperbole the phrases of extravagant eulogy upon the person of Gautama, and extol his wisdom as though it were boundless, never do attribute to him creative powers, or the Divine glory and claims. Mr. S. Hardy quotes from a high Sinhalese authority:—

The nature
and object
of worship.

“The eye cannot see anything, nor the ear hear anything more excellent, more worthy of regard than Buddha. The Rishis

may tell the number of metres in the sky, hide the earth with the tip of the finger, may shake the forest of Himâla by a cotton thread; but there is no being who can swim to the opposite side of the ocean of excellence possessed by Buddha.”¹

The sacred books virtually deify Buddha.

The Sacred Books and the people do virtually deify him, and yet there is an enormous difference between their treatment of him, their greatest, and what we mean by religious worship. The *Yasomitra* (quoted by Burnouf) declares that:—

“If God, or spirit, or matter were the original cause of the universe, then the universe would have been created at once, for the cause could not exist without producing its effect; but that inasmuch as all things follow a perpetual cycle, animals from the wombs of mothers, trees from little seeds, a vast cycle of events and not a will or a cause have produced the universe.”

No Creator, Moral Governor, nor Supreme Lawgiver in the Suttras of Buddha.

In none of the Sutras of Buddha is there any trace of any world-creating substance, any Being in whom all things live. The universe is an awful fact, whose tyranny is to be subdued by the intellectual apprehension of its impermanence and illusion. Moral duties are inculcated without any reference to the Giver of any law or to any Creator, Deliverer, or Lord of the human spirit. There is much honour done to him who has unriddled the mystery of suffering, but none to Him whose laws constitute the basis of the moral universe.

The recoil from the nihilism at the back of all things.

The heart of man has recoiled from the utter nihilism at the back of all things, and has in northern Buddhism (as we have seen) imagined a

¹ *Manual of Buddhism*, pp. 359-363; quoting the MS. of the *Sadharmaratuakâie*.

circle of lofty beings, who are able to help and soothe the desolate spirit, when it turns from the illusions of sense. Amitabha and Maitreya (called *Omito* and *Mile*), and other vast powers, are approached in reverence and prayer; but throughout China, Buddha himself, the greatest of them all, is not appealed to for present help in time of trouble, any more than is Confucius or Laotse.

The imagined comforters and helpers of Northern Buddhism.

(b) The Buddhist doctrine of *the ground of the universe* is utterly agnostic, if not positively atheistic. The tendency to suffering is universal, and immoral actions augment it. The most iron fate links action with action, and affiliates every possible condition or circumstance—all alike wretched—to some perversion of will in the present or previous lives; but this chain of causation is not to the Buddhist an act of a supreme will, or *modus operandi* of any moral being. Prayer cannot alter its incidence, and no power outside of man can aid the devotee. “Work out *your own* salvation” by self-obliteration and obedience, is the last word of Buddha.

The Buddhist doctrine of the ground of the universe agnostic.

With this root principle Christianity is absolutely discrepant, and can come into no terms of agreement or compromise. The Christ is the Revealer of the Father in heaven, because He is the only-begotten and eternal Son incarnate, and He maintains against all the lies and corruption of the human heart, and all the peril of the human soul, His supreme goodness, justice, power, and love. The

Christ as the eternal Son is the revealer of the Father.

idea that God is LOVE, that God is SPIRIT, that God is LIGHT, that the knowledge of God is eternal life, is the logical contradictory of Buddhism.

The Buddhist theory of the universe.

The Buddhist theory of the universe is that it forms one vast lazar-house, through which the flame of all-devouring desire and boundless illusion is ever rushing. Continuity of suffering does not quench the flame. Death does not deliver life from its incessant, consuming fire. The only salvation is such a habit of mind as becomes insensible to the flame, and is the obliteration

The Christian theory of the universe as the Father's house.

of all desire. The Christian theory of suffering is that it is caused and intensified by sin; that the universe is the Father's house, that in the restoration of filial relations with Him there is fulness of joy, and that suffering vanishes in the consciousness of perfect peace. The Buddhist

Why the Buddhist admires Gautama.

admires, and all but adores, the memory of the Gautama the Buddha, because he is supposed to have revealed the way out of the cycle of birth and death. The Christian adores the Son of God, who by reason of His incarnation and death upon the cross to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, has been highly exalted and received "the name that is above every name." In His own hand He holds the keys of death and hades, and delivers man from death by the gift and fulness of the eternal life beyond the grave.

Why the Christian adores the Son of God.

(c) Buddhism recognizes sin against the moral

law; but the law is impersonal, and the wages of sin are imposed by eternal fate. It has no conception of pardon, or redemption, or sacrifice. Christianity recognizes an awful possibility of sin and punishment, and a widely present sorrow; but it brings to human corruption a sufficient antidote, replaces evil desires by consuming thirst for that which is the holiest and the best; it reveals a joy of reconciliation with God, that transmutes the sorrow into blessedness, and gilds the bed of death with light. It makes union with the Infinite God, through the incarnation and sacrifice of the God-man, the hope of the world. Buddhism has no gospel for the ignorant or the babe, holds out no hope of deliverance except to the wise and prudent, to the learned and strong. It has conjured up a world of fancied terrors, from which it would save all forms of life, when they shall have once reached the pinnacle of metaphysical subtlety. Jesus said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, for of such is the kingdom of God."

(d) Verily Buddhism, throughout its vast extent of pessimistic cosmology and ethical fatality, with its ghastly Nirvâna, and the hopelessness of its *summum bonum*, seems to us to be an exceeding bitter cry for that which Christianity has to offer. It proclaims the misery of man, but has stumbled in its explanation of that misery. It proclaims the evil

Sin according to
Buddhism

The
Christian
antidote to
sin.

Buddhism
has no
gospel for
the
ignorant or
the babe.

Jesus calls
the bur-
dened and
children to
Himself.

The
exceeding
bitter cry of
Buddhism.

of sin, and though it leaves no place for forgiveness and has no notion of a Redeemer, it vaguely asks for pardon, justification, and eternal life. Its willingness to accept a noble ideal of manhood when made known to it, is a mute prophecy that when the true Man is revealed to it, it will call Him "Lord of all." Varily our Lord would have said of Gautama, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God;" and he would have exclaimed "Lord, to whom shall we go but unto Thee?"

The mute prophecy of Buddhism.

The idea of humanity as a whole grasped by Buddhism.

Buddhism has embraced some races, but Christianity has mastered men of every race.

Hope concerning the Buddhist millions.

Buddhism grasped the idea of humanity as a whole, and this proclaims a nearer approach to Christianity than any heathen religion. It has embraced Aryan and Tartar, Chinaman and Turkoman, in its arms; but Christianity has mastered every kind of man. In Him who is One with the Father, the Aryan and Semite, the Barbarian and Scythian, the Saxon and Celt, the philosopher and child, have found their deepest unity. Surely it is not too much to hope that the Christian Church may even yet convince the Buddhist millions, that not blind destiny but Infinite Love enwraps this universe, that the fear of endless transmigration from eternity to eternity is an unsustained delusion, that there is One "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

CHRISTIANITY
AND
ANCIENT PAGANISM

BY

J. MURRAY MITCHELL, M.A., LL.D.

Argument of the Tract.

THE comparative study of religions has, in our day, become exceedingly popular; but erroneous ideas are often expressed as to the position which Christianity holds among the various systems of belief.

The subject is of very wide extent. The first thing necessary for its proper discussion is a large induction of fully ascertained facts.

Happily, great progress has recently been made in the investigation of various ancient religions.

The Tract deals with ancient religions that were once widely influential, *but are now extinct*. In the body of the Tract the systems that prevailed among civilized nations are discussed; and, in the note at the end, a brief statement is given of the beliefs and rites of the chief uncivilized races of ancient Europe.

The unique position held among ancient forms of belief by the Jewish religion is pointed out; as well as the relation of that faith to Christianity.

It is shown that the latter came in "the fulness of the time."

Reference is also made to the connection between true religion and civilization.

CHRISTIANITY

AND

ANCIENT PAGANISM.



I.



MUCH attention is paid in our days to the comparative study of Religions. But although now prosecuted with greater zeal than heretofore, it is by no means a new subject of inquiry.

The comparative study of religions not a new one.

The Hebrew prophets frequently drew a contrast between the God of Israel and the idols of the nations; and their cry of exultation was, "Their rock is not as our rock; even our enemies themselves being judges."

The Hebrew prophets contrasted the God of Israel and the idols of the nations.

In like manner the apologists of the early Christian centuries made comparisons between the teaching of Christ and that of Greek and Roman books; and they elaborately placed the pure rites enjoined by the Gospel side by side with the polluted observances of Heathenism.

The early Christian apologists contrasted the teaching and rites of the Gospel and of Heathenism.

Even so, soon after Mohammadanism arose, the

The Koran examined and refuted by Asiatic Christians.

Koran was examined and refuted by Christians living in Asia.¹ Nor was Europe content to combat Islam only with the sword; the book that professed to be a new revelation from heaven was by-and-by translated into Latin and carefully criticized.

The desire of the opponents of Christianity to become acquainted with the sacred books of the East.

In like manner, when Europe became aware of the existence of writings which were regarded as sacred by the nations of the farther East, an earnest desire was felt to become acquainted with their contents. The feeling appears to have been strongest on the part of the opponents of Christianity; and the reason of this is not far to seek. Unbelievers expected that the books of the Oriental nations would prove great repositories of wisdom; for it was a tradition that the philosophers of Greece had drawn much from Eastern sources. It was the hope of Voltaire and the French Encyclopedists that the sacred books of Persia, India, and China, would be found equal, if not surpass, the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. Hence, when Roberto de' Nobili, the nephew of Cardinal Bellarmine, produced the work which he sought to palm off on the Brahmans of Madura as a genuine Veda that had been overlooked, Voltaire was completely taken in, and caused the wonderful book to be twice republished in Europe.² Here is an

The hope cherished that they would, equal, if not surpass, the Jewish and Christian Scriptures.

¹ By Al Kindi and others.

² At Yverdun and Paris.

Oriental work, said the sage of Ferney, very like the Bible, and at least as good. It is a singular story, though seldom remembered now.

But ere long a genuine Oriental work was conveyed to Europe. Anquetil du Perron returned from his travels in India, bearing as *spolia opima* the writings usually ascribed to the famous Zoroaster. All learned Europe waited in mute expectation for the translation which he at once set about preparing. When, in 1771, the oracle, which had been silent for ages, at length became vocal, the disappointment was infinite; and the general sentiment found expression in the sarcasm of Jones—afterwards the learned Sir William—“Either Zoroaster never wrote these books, or he was not possessed of common sense.” The censure was far too sweeping; but, no doubt, the Zoroastrian books were amazingly different from what either Christians or unbelievers had expected they would prove to be.

The writings ascribed to Zoroaster translated.

The disappointment felt with them.

In recent years, various causes have combined to further the comparative study of Religions. For more than forty years, in fact, ever since Grotendorf grappled with the cuneiform, and Champollion with the hieroglyphic, inscriptions, steady progress has been made in their interpretation; and a flood of light has been poured on the history of at least seven ancient nations. Oriental scholars have, in the meantime, been

The recent furtherance of the comparative study of religions.

laboriously investigating the sacred writings of China, India, and Persia; and the results of their inquiries have been largely communicated to the public in translations.¹ The subject may be said to be becoming popular; for it is presented in every kind of publication, from the stately review down to the halfpenny newspaper. All this is well, when the study of comparative theology is presented in a truth-loving and candid spirit. The intelligent Christian will by no means take alarm at the result of discovery in this field of investigation, any more than in the field of science. Every new fact he will heartily welcome, though it behoves him—as it behoves all—to scrutinize well the conclusions which may be drawn from facts, whether real or imaginary. One great fault of the age is rash deduction, too hasty generalization. Lord Eldon's favourite maxim would stand us in good stead in other provinces as well as that of Law—*Sat cito si sat bene.*²

But we must not forget to say that the study of Religions is deeply interesting for another reason. "A man's religion," said Thomas Carlyle, "is the most important thing about him." So we may also say of a community. Therefore, every lover of his kind must watch the movements of the

¹ In the *Sacred Books of the East*, Trübner's *Oriental Series*, and many separate publications,

² "Soon enough, if well enough."

The subject becoming popular.

The Christian need not take alarm.

Too hasty generalization a fault of the age.

The importance of religion.

religious principle in man with keen interest and profound sympathy. How have our brethren in various lands and ages dealt with the duties of life, the trials of life, the perplexing problems of life? What have been their thoughts of God, and of sin, of a world to come? Questions like these are of engrossing interest to every philanthropist. Nor will he be repelled from the inquiry if he find that it is in connexion with religion more than any other subject that we have to deal with the morbid anatomy of human nature, and that the saddest aberrations of the mind have been when engaged in the prosecution of the highest of all questions.

Moral and religious problems all engrossing to the philanthropist.

It is only fair that we should mention at the outset what is the point of view from which we examine the field of inquiry. We believe the Christian Revelation to be unique; *cui nihil viget simile aut secundum*.¹ But that belief by no means involves the consequence that the holder of it should be unfair to other systems of religion. Nay, the very strength of his conviction of the supreme glory of the Gospel, and the assurance that all competition between it and other systems is out of the question, ought to contribute to calmness and impartiality in his judgment of other creeds. In truth, he must be a very narrow-

The Christian revelation unique.

The Christian can be calm and impartial in his judgment of other creeds.

¹ "To whom there exists nothing similar or second." So Horace, speaking of Jupiter as supreme.

Fragments of primeval revelation may have been borne down the stream of time.

Reason and conscience gifts of heaven.

The relation of the Hebrew prophets to the idolatries around them.

mind Christian who looks on Pagan systems as merely masses of unrelieved falsehood. Why should they be so? The Christian believes, and many who do not call themselves Christians believe with him, that there was given to man a primeval Revelation; is it probable that no fragments of it have been borne down the stream of time? Again, there is such a thing as the light of nature. Reason and conscience are in man—most precious gifts of heaven. They often speak, alas! only in whispers; but to the listening ear those whispers are audible. The Christian then should expect to find, and he should rejoice to find, that heathen systems are not, of necessity, all “dark as Erebus.”

It is instructive to note how differently, at different times, the point now before us has been regarded. We could not expect that the Hebrew prophets, in vindicating the claims of Jehovah against Baal or Chemosh, would carefully search for redeeming points in the idolatries around them; fidelity to God and humankind demanded that they should dwell on their baseness and corruption, and denounce them with righteous, vehement indignation. Parleying—temporizing—philosophizing would have been as ridiculous as ruinous. Your man of science can prove that there is heat in ice; but we do not, on that account, enter an ice-house to warm ourselves.

But it is remarkable how soon a calm and philo-

sophic estimate of Heathenism was actually formed. The statements on this subject by the first and greatest of all missionaries to the heathen are broad, wise, and comprehensive. Even those who question the inspiration of St. Paul must admire his calmness and impartiality in dealing with a subject on which surely, if on any, his feelings might have been expected to carry him away. The teaching of the Apostle as to Heathenism may be summed up under five heads. He declares that

The formation of a calm and philosophic estimate of Heathenism.

The teaching of the Apostle Paul about Heathenism

- 1st. The invisible things of God, even His eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen, being understood from the things that are made.
- 2nd. The Gentiles, when they knew God, glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful. They did not like to retain God in their knowledge.
- 3rd They therefore became vain in their imaginations (reasonings), and their foolish heart (*i.e.* understanding) was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise they became fools.
- 4th. They then changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and quadrupeds, and reptiles,—worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator.

5th. All moral corruption followed. They were given over to a reprobate mind, to do those things that are not fitting.¹

The
Apostle's
statement
a just
historical
account.

We believe the Apostle's statement to be a just historical account of the origin and progress of Pagan idolatry—a key which, better than any other we know, unlocks the secret of Heathenism, and best explains its strange and manifold contradictions. At the same time, while true as a whole, true of the mass, we do not suppose that St. Paul intended it to apply to every individual Pagan. He asserts, indeed, that there are “Gentiles who have no [written] law, but show the work of the law written on their hearts.” Let us hope that those who “seek after God, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him,” have throughout the ages been no inconsiderable number. And let us rest assured that the eye of the all-compassionate God rested graciously on all such. Only let us remember that these exceptional men, if they found God, did so, not because of their sad environment, but in spite of it.

Exceptional
cases
recognised
by him.

St. Paul's
spirit shared
by many
Christian
writers.

When we come later down we find not a few Christian writers dealing with Paganism in the spirit of St. Paul. The earlier Fathers acknow-

¹ Compare the striking language of Cicero with that of the Apostle. *Multi de diis prava sentiunt; id enim vitioso more effici solet.*—*Tusc.* i. 13. (Many have wrong notions of the gods; for that usually springs from vicious morals.)

ledged that there were pure elements in Heathenism; and these they attributed to the truth diffused among men by Christ, the Word.¹ It was, however, the philosophy rather than the religion of Greece in which the fathers found "a trace of wisdom and an impulse from God."² Yet certain of the Fathers, especially the vehement Tertullian, gave no quarter, either to the one or the other.

The pure elements in Heathenism attributed to the truth diffused by Christ—the Word.

In modern days, there long existed a disposition to paint non-Christian systems in the darkest colours. Thus, Mohammad was regarded as having been, from the outset, a deep designing impostor, animated by mere selfishness and ambition, and dexterously trimming his sails as the wind chanced to blow from a Pagan, a Jewish, or a Christian quarter. We have since learned that the problem of his mixed character and lamentable fall is not to be solved so easily.

The modern disposition to paint non-Christian systems in the darkest colours.

This mode of dealing with Gentile religions continued at least as far down as the days of Milton. When we remember the lavish use which the great poet makes of Greek and Roman mythology, we are hardly prepared for the summary condemnation of Pagan faith which he pronounces both in his earlier and later writings. Thus, speaking of the god Osiris as terrified at the birth of Christ, he summarily dismisses him to his proper place:

This lasted till Milton's days.

¹ The *λόγος σπερματικός*.

² So Clement of Alexandria (Clark's Edition), vol. I. p. 49.

Nor is Osiris seen
 In Memphian grove or green,
 Trampling the unshowered grass with lowings loud ;
 Nor can he be at rest
 Within his sacred chest,—
 Nought but profoundest hell can be his shroud.

Pagan systems traced by Milton to the influence of fallen angels.

Even so, he traces the origin of Pagan systems to the influence of the fallen angels, and briefly stigmatizes them all as

Gay religions full of pomp and gold,
 And devils to adore for deities.

A great reaction has taken place of late years to an opposite extreme.

Gradually, however, and especially of late years, a great reaction has taken place. The pendulum, which swung too far in one direction, now threatens to reach the opposite extreme. It is high time to call for a reaction from the reaction.

The principle that "there is some soul of goodness in things evil," is applied to cases which assuredly were not in Shakespeare's eye when he put the words into the mouth of King Henry.

Evil is not good in the making.

We are now told that evil is "good in the making." Evil, indeed, is often compelled, in the overruling providence of God, to bring about results very different from what the evil-doer sought to reach; but surely evil is, in itself, intrinsically, eternally hateful. Now, this tendency to find some good in all things leads many far astray in the study of Heathen systems. What is black as midnight is often declared to be only a somewhat deeper shade of grey.

We frequently hear of a gradual development of spiritual truth parallel to the progress of civilization. All, or at least most, of the great Religions of the world are held to have contributed their share to the advancement of true religion. Thus, Christianity is only the last in the series—the last as yet, though possibly destined to give place, ere long, to a system still more exalted and refined.

Christianity is regarded as a product of a gradual development.

The hypothesis of Evolution has taken such possession of the mind of multitudes, that they push it—as if it were an established truth—into regions in which the principle, whether true or false, can bear no legitimate sway. It is frequently maintained that all human things advance by calm, orderly steps, with slight, if any, evidence of a pause, none of retrogression. But history denies this. It is of course true that, taken in its wide extent, humanity moves on, as Wordsworth says,

History denies that all human things advance by calm and orderly steps without pause.

With an ascent and progress *in the main*.

Humanity advances *in the main*.

But if many races have risen, some have remained stationary, and others have sunk. True, in art and science there has been a great advance on the whole. But we must not forget that many of the highest attainments of the human mind were made long ages ago. Thus Egypt and the East¹ handed over their sculpture, architecture, and other arts to Greece; and there they rapidly attained an ex-

Many of the highest attainments made ages ago.

¹ Egypt, Phœnicia, Lydia, Assyria.

The intellect, imagination, and taste of the Greeks.

cellence which has not been equalled in the lapse of two thousand years. Again, the poetry of Homer, the oratory of Demosthenes, the speculative power of Aristotle and Plato; are not these still unequalled, or at all events unsurpassed? In intellect, imagination, taste, the Greeks, we venture to say, have excelled all other races. They were inventive too; but their originality was controlled by an exquisite sense of fitness, proportion, harmony.

The continuous progress of art and science purely imaginary.

The continuous progress of art and science, then, is purely imaginary. Knowledge has increased; intellect has not. It was of yore that genius plumed her pinions for her highest flight; and succeeding generations have gazed enviously upward, as they have seen her

Sailing with supreme dominion,
Through the azure deep of air.

The Greeks not likely to be surpassed in the higher intellectual endowments.

In other words, Almighty God was pleased to impart to the ancient Greeks more of inventive and reasoning power, and a more acute perception of the beautiful, than to any other race. Nor does it appear probable that any future generation will surpass, or even equal them in the higher intellectual endowments.

These considerations certainly do not predispose us to expect that we shall ever be able to trace a regular, continuous development of religion among the nations. We need not be surprised if we find,

in many cases, not improvement, but deterioration. And there is not the slightest ground for the assertion that Christianity is only the latest addition to an edifice that has been slowly rising throughout the ages, and to which most, or at least many, nations have contributed. On the contrary, it can be demonstrated that, when we distinguish between religion and mere intellectual culture,¹

Things demonstrably true of Christianity

1st. There is no truth in any other religion which does not shine forth with brighter light in Christianity ;

2nd. Christianity has borrowed no truth from any Pagan creed ; and

3rd. Every system except Christianity mingles much error along with the truth that it maintains.²

We ought, perhaps, to state here that we regard

¹ It will be seen as we proceed that we do not overlook the importance, or question the value, of intellectual culture. It is an essential element in modern civilization.

Intellectual culture an essential element of modern civilization. Socratic Ethics.

Nor let it be forgotten that the Socratic ethics—especially as elaborated in the later Stoic schools—powerfully affected the Roman jurists, and through them the legislation of modern Europe.

² Whether any portion of the Jewish *ritual* was drawn from Egypt is a different question. The symbolism that is seen in the *cherub* has parallels among various nations—Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians, etc. That it was borrowed is not proved. The so-called Egyptian *ark*, which was a boat, had a very different use from the Jewish ark.

Derivation of Jewish ritual.

Judaism
and Chris-
tianity
regarded
as one
religion.

Judaism and Christianity—the former as contained in the Old Testament, the latter in the New—as one religion,—one in the sense in which the rosebud and the expanded rose, the “bright consummate flower,” are only one. Or we may say, they **are** related to each other, as dawn is to sunrise.

The Tract
deals with
extinct
forms of
Ancient
Paganism.

Our Tract deals with “Christianity and Ancient Paganism.” By Ancient Paganism we here mean those forms of Paganism which existed in ancient days, but are now extinct. There are other systems which existed in antiquity and have survived to the present time. The most noted of these are Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. We do not treat of these.¹

It were well, if it were only possible, to discuss the ancient religions in a strictly chronological order. We could then better ascertain how much or how little the later systems had been indebted to the earlier. We shall keep this in mind; but it is difficult, in some cases, to state the historic sequence.

II.

Extinct
Pagan
religions.

THE great religions of Pagan antiquity that are now extinct were the following: the Egyptian; the Babylonian and Assyrian; the Phœnician; the Lydian and Phrygian; the Hittite; the Greek, and

¹ Each of these systems forms the subject of a separate Tract in the Present Day Series (Nos. 25, 33, 46, 18).

the Roman. The religions of the Syrians, Moabites, and other races in and around Palestine may be considered along with that of the Phœnicians. Those of the chief uncivilized races of ancient Europe—Celtic, Teutonic, and Slavonian—must be treated, if at all, very briefly, seeing that our knowledge of them is still very scanty.

The religion of uncivilized races.

1. THE EGYPTIAN SYSTEM.

WE begin with the Egyptian system. Civilization seems to have commenced in the region of Mesopotamia; but the earliest monuments of it that have come down to us are connected with the valley of the Nile.

The earliest monuments of civilization connected with the valley of the Nile.

The religion of Egypt presents very perplexing problems. One of these is its extraordinary inconsistency. In some writings we meet with ideas of deity which are excessively refined—refined till they have become impalpable and colourless; in others, we find polytheism in as debased a form as that in which it appears among the lowest savages. More remarkable still, we find these two things not only existing at the same time, but expressed in the same writings. Hence, vehement debate among Egyptologists. Most of them hold that the refined conceptions came first, and that the latter form was a corruption gradually introduced. It is at least certain, as one of the strongest supporters¹ of the

Inconsistency of the religion of Egypt.

Vehement debate among Egyptologists.

¹ M. Maspero.

Monotheistic ideas probably the first in Egypt.

opposite theory admits, that monotheistic ideas made their way very early into Egypt. It appears to us that the balance of the evidence is in favour of their having been there first.

Two distinct races probably originally inhabited Egypt.

But it is not improbable that the population of Egypt consisted of two races originally distinct, one mentally lower, probably African, and another much higher, probably Asiatic Shemites. In that case the religion was composite and inconsistent from the beginning.

The conceptions in Egyptian monuments vague, confused, conflicting.

The refined system has by most been called monotheism; by others, henotheism. Others still call it pantheism. The dispute need not surprise us; for the conceptions expressed in Egyptian monuments are vague, confused, conflicting; nor does it appear probable that any deeper study will ever prove them to be mutually consistent.

Early appearance of Sun-worship.

Sun-worship unquestionably appears early. This, and the reverence of metaphysical deities, are mingled together even on the oldest monuments.

Abundance of symbolism.

Above all systems that ever were, the Egyptian abounded in symbolism. Every idea, every shadow of an idea, had to be represented—made visible. The faith had then to pay the penalty of this mental weakness. The sign, ere long, concealed the thing signified—it became its substitute.

A concealed spiritual system ascribed to the priests.

Many writers contend that the higher classes—or at all events, the priests—were acquainted with a truly spiritual system, which they carefully con-

cealed from the common people. This is possible. *Populus vult decipi et decipiatur*¹ is a hideous maxim which, doubtless, has had sway in various lands. But there is no evidence of the intentional concealment of higher truths on the part of the Egyptian priests. It was no function of theirs to educate the people; and probably the masses could not rise above the lowest form of brute-worship. Nor did the priests and the higher classes themselves really rise above it; they only succeeded, in a way difficult for us to conceive, in mingling higher and lower conceptions, and so identifying the divinity with the brute. The religion changed; it changed more than is at first apparent, for the Egyptians were very conservative of ancient *forms*; but the degrading brute-worship endured as long as any part of the religion. The same animals, however, were not adored over the whole of the country; some which were worshipped at one place were pursued and killed at another; and hence violent disputes often ending in bloodshed. But we need not pursue the subject farther. We merely add that even the Greeks and the Romans were shocked by the Egyptian worship. Plutarch gravely reprobates its "degrading rites;" and the poet Juvenal levels against it his sharpest shafts of ridicule.²

Not the function of the Egyptian priests to educate the people.

The priests mingled higher and lower conceptions and identified the divinity with the brute.

Greeks and Romans shocked by Egyptian worship.

¹ The people wish to be deceived, and let them be so.

² Who has not heard, where Egypt's realms are named,
What monster gods her frantic sons have framed? etc.

The Egyptian religion grew more and more mystical and magical

In the course of its long existence the religion became more and more mystical, and more and more magical. Thus, in the "Book of the Dead," the most remarkable document which has come down from the ancient days of Egypt, comparatively little is said of duties, but much of spells and incantations.

Good moral precepts here and there in books and monuments.

There are, no doubt, as was to be expected, many good moral precepts scattered here and there, in books and on monuments. But "the morality remained stationary at the elementary stage; and its moral maxims never rise to the rank of principles."¹ "The morality must have been totally independent of the religion."¹ No divorce could have been more unhappy; and we need not wonder that the naked ethical maxim often remained impotent, while "a thousand superstitions took the place of the attempt to lead an honest life."²

The morality stationary at the elementary stage, and independent of religion.

The priests, in the original constitution of Egypt, had comparatively little power. That power, however, steadily increased, until everything in life was ruled by them. In Upper Egypt they, by-and-by, usurped full regal authority; and they retained it long.

More use of priestly power.

¹ So Prof. Tiele.

² Poole, in *Encycl. Britan.* The same writer says that we have, in the "Book of the Dead," "a glimpse of truth seen through thick mists peopled with phantoms of basest superstition."

Women in Egypt were allowed much liberty ; but evidently it often ran into license. This was especially the case during the pilgrimage to Bubastis, which Herodotus tells us was by far the most popular and magnificent of Egyptian festivals. Evil ran riot during this great celebration.¹ Truly, religion and morality were separable and separate in ancient Egypt. Monogamy was the rule, but concubinage was frequent. Brother and sister often intermarried.

Liberty of women often ran into license.

And now, is there any element of truth which Egypt contributed towards the establishment of the final form of religion? We have seen that this is frequently maintained ; but the belief seems to have no foundation. If, as Diodorus held, the Greeks derived their religion from Egypt, they entirely changed it; they humanized the gods, instead of keeping them brutal. The idea that Moses, who was skilled in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, drew any of his lofty conceptions of Jehovah from Egyptian sources, was often loudly asserted in former days ; but it seems now generally abandoned even by critics of the negative school, like Kuenen. Wellhausen, **too**, distinctly affirms that "Moses gave no new idea of God to his people. The question whence he derived it could not possibly be worse answered than by a reference

Egypt contributed no element of truth to the establishment of the final form of religion.

The idea that Moses drew any of his lofty conceptions of Jehovah from Egyptian sources abandoned even by negative critics.

¹ Tiele, *Egyptian Religion*, p. 192.

Wellhausen maintains that Jehovah has nothing in common with the deities of Egypt.

to his relations with the priestly caste and their wisdom." He maintains that Jehovah has nothing in common with the deities of Egypt. Of course, we do not forget that the multitude who had long been familiar with the brute worship around them, began to adore the golden calf; but we know that the degrading rite was suppressed with a sternness of indignation which must have profoundly impressed the whole of that generation and many succeeding ones.

The worship of Osiris and Ra formed the basis of the Egyptian religion.

The religion, as has been said, sustained great changes.¹ In the oldest monuments Osiris and Ra are mentioned; their worship formed the basis of the religion. Each is a divine being revealing himself in the sun.² They are often confounded with each other. Afterwards, eight deities were classed in the first order; twelve in the second; and four in the third. The highest of the first order was Amn or Amun (usually said to mean *concealed*). He has properly the form of man; he sits with crown and sceptre on a throne, and holds in his hand a kind of cross, which is the symbol of *life*.

¹ De Rougé and not a few others trace the high spiritual conceptions of God to primeval Revelation; and they point to evidences of a gradual corruption of these. Tiele admits that the most ancient system was the simplest and purest. And yet he calls the corruption of this "a retrogression to the earlier stand-point." He thus holds that purity first grew out of impurity, and then impurity out of purity. The explanation is forced. De Rougé's is far more simple and consistent.

² Tiele, p. 41.

He was often united with Ra, and became Amun-Ra—the hidden one who is revealed in the sun. Most of the deities had animals' heads, which were probably symbols of qualities.

By the time of Herodotus Osiris had become the chief deity. Isis was his mother, sister, and wife. Her worship steadily increased. The myth of Osiris was the mother-myth in Egypt. He was said to have been killed and buried, his body having been cut in pieces, which were scattered. He revived, and became the judge of the dead. The future life greatly occupied the mind of the Egyptians. As time went on, the myth of Osiris became more terrible; and the views entertained of a future existence more and more gloomy. In the "Book of the Dead" the adventures of the departed soul came to be described with appalling minuteness of detail. It is important to note that there was no idea of God as forgiving sin. The wicked soul was devoured by serpents, cast into flames, or otherwise destroyed. The good man himself had to encounter sore trials in the other world. Snares lay in his path; monsters assailed him. His safety lay in grasping the sacred spear, and repeating magical words from the sacred books. Thus, at last he reached the happy fields, in which he could labour as on earth, but reap harvests far more abundant than he had done before.

Osiris the chief deity in the time of Herodotus.

The myth of Osiris the mother-myth in Egypt.

The future life greatly occupied the Egyptian mind.

The departed soul in the "Book of the Dead."

The principle of moral retribution accepted.

In estimating the character of the Egyptian system, the doctrine of a future life must, by no means, be left out of account. The principle of moral retribution was accepted; and if Greece really borrowed it from Egypt, she did not retain so firm a hold of it. But we would gladly know how the belief affected men during life, and in the prospect of death. The Egyptian deities were strictly, sternly just. What then, as he faced the regions of Amenti—the other world—were the thoughts of a man who had, on the whole, sought to live virtuously, but who, like all of us, had “bitter thoughts of conscience born?” We remember the triumphant language of the prophet Micah—“Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity?” and even, in the earliest days of Israel, the mercy of Jehovah was declared in equally emphatic terms with His righteousness.¹ Now, of mercifulness, in the sense of forgiving sin, there is no trace whatever in the Egyptian conception of the divine. Surely a most marked deficiency.

No trace of mercifulness in the sense of forgiving sin in the Egyptian conception of the Divine.

The usual explanation of the impression of the future world on the Egyptian mind.

The strong impression which the future world made on the Egyptian mind is very noteworthy. Whence could it spring? The usual explanation is that it was “nothing but a mystic representation, arising out of sun-worship.”² The sun sank

¹ See Exodus xxxiv. 6, 7.]

² Tiele, p. 70.

in the west and disappeared; he died. Yet he was not destroyed; he moved across the dark under-world, and soon, with undiminished brightness, "flamed in the forehead of the morning sky."¹ So every good man would triumph over death. Such is the explanation; but it seems to halt. For though day succeeds night, night again succeeds day; and if the solar phenomenon had been the foundation of the belief, we should have expected a balanced dualism, victory and defeat alternating in a perpetually renewed struggle between light and darkness, life and death, good and evil. We believe that in Amun, the "hidden one," we can still trace an early conception of the supreme divinity, brought, probably, by the Shemites from the plains of Shinar. The sun was naturally turned to as a representative of Amun; and they were often blended into one—Amun Ra, the hidden and revealed in one. The other deities seem to have been personified attributes. With regard to belief in a future existence it seems necessarily to accompany a belief in deity.

The explanation halting.

An early conception of the Supreme Divinity. Amun—the hidden one.

Belief in a future existence seems necessarily to accompany a belief in deity.

We cannot say that the character of the Egyptians stood high, either intellectually or morally. No writing of theirs survives which betokens genius or even deep thought. They had massive, not graceful, architecture. Art soon became stationary. In later ages there was an

The character of the Egyptians.

¹ Milton, in *Lycidas*.

Elements in
Egyptian
character.

incongruous blending of Egyptian and Grecian architecture. Plodding, patient, industrious, they doubtless were. But they were also tyrannical; given to wine; and careless in morals. Some add, and not without reason, "lying, thieving, treacherous, cringing, and intensely prejudiced against strangers."¹

The
sovereign
and the
people.

In Egypt we may behold a despot ruling a nation of slaves. The sovereign reigned as representing divinity. Limitation of his power was simply inconceivable.² In no nation, ancient or modern—not in ancient Assyria or modern Turkey—was "the right divine of kings"³ so deeply implanted in the mind of the subjects.

2. BABYLONIAN AND ASSYRIAN SYSTEMS.

The religion
of Babylon
and Assyria.

WE come now to speak of the religion of Babylon and Assyria.

The
antiquity
of existing
monuments.

The Tigro-Euphrates valley, with its streams and rich alluvial plains, was a very early seat of civilization. Monuments exist which may carry us as far back as three thousand years before the Christian era, or probably farther. The first inhabitants

¹ So R. S. Poole, in Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*.

² Tiele points out how unlike Egypt was to Israel in this respect. The existence of the prophetic order secured to Israel almost a constitutional government, or its equivalent.

³ The right divine of kings to govern wrong."

appear, from the evidence of language, to have been Turanian, rather than Shemitic—their language being of the Ural-Altai class. The name Akkadian (mountaineer) is now usually given to them. Another important tribe, evidently Shemitic, then pressed into those fertile regions—probably from the Syro-Arabian desert. The two races appear to have mingled in Southern Chaldæa, and a high degree of civilization was early attained.

The first inhabitants Turanian.

A Shemitic tribe pressed into those regions.

Their religion bore abundant traces of their double origin. The Akkadian faith—like Turanian systems generally—was Animistic or Shamanistic, that is to say, fundamentally, spirit-worship. Every object in nature, whether animate or inanimate, was supposed to be ruled by a spirit. Malignant spirits were especially numerous; many of them ghosts, that is, the spirits of the dead. The spirits, however, were all subject to the control of a priest, or wizard. By the power of spells and incantations, the wizard could compel them to do his bidding. The Akkadian liturgies that have been preserved are almost all exorcisms—mere magical formulæ.

Traces of double origin of the religion

The Akkadian liturgies all exorcisms.

The Shemitic race, that came in later and largely blended with the Akkadians, had a religion of a higher type. M. Renan has asserted that all Shemites had a monotheistic instinct; but the assertion cannot be accepted unless the term monotheism be divested of its ordinary meaning. Most

The Shemitic race had a religion of a higher type.

Most of the Shemitic races idolatrous and polytheistic.

of the Shemitic races have been conspicuously idolatrous, as well as polytheistic; and if it be said that one deity was almost always regarded as superior to the rest, the same assertion may be made regarding other than Shemitic peoples.¹

The sun-god among the Shemites who occupied Chaldæa.

The sun-god held a high place among the Shemites who occupied Chaldæa; and the moon-god, one almost equally high. In countries like Arabia and Chaldæa, the magnificence of the starry heavens, and the moon "walking in her brightness," compel attention by their mystery, their beauty, and their beneficence.² We cannot be surprised if, with the mass, admiration passed into adoration. Astronomy was studied, and it became astrology—one might say, inevitably so.

Life in Babylon.

The Babylonian faith continued to show clear traces of its twofold origin. Life in Babylon must have been "almost intolerable;"³ superstition conjured up a thousand terrors; unseen malignant beings were everywhere, and everywhere plotting mischief. Hence, magic early became developed into a regular science. Divination, augury, fortune-telling, necromancy, and kindred base beliefs flourished in foul luxuriance.

The early development of magic.

¹ Thus, Herr Jellinghaus, a missionary who spent years among the Kols in India, says they may almost be classed as monotheists. They believe in innumerable spirits, but in the sun-spirit as supreme.

² Very notable in this connexion are the words in Job xxxi. 26-28.

³ So Prof. Sayce.

“Stand now,” exclaims the prophet Isaiah, addressing Babylon, “with thine enchantments and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth.”¹

The prophet also calls on the “astrologers, the star-gazers, and the monthly prognosticators,” to foretell, if they can, and avert, the destruction which was fast overtaking the haughty city. It would appear that in the court of Nebuchadnezzar, the highest place was given to expounders of dreams, soothsayers, and astrologers; and that only after them came the civil administrators of the empire.

The place of interpreters of dreams, etc., at the court of Nebuchadnezzar.

The doctrine of one God shines out clear and unmistakable in various important documents. In Smith’s *Chaldean Account of Genesis* this is very fully shown.

The doctrine of one God in various important documents.

“At the head of the Babylonian theology stands Anu—a deity who is sometimes identified with the heavens—sometimes considered as the Ruler and God of heaven.”

In one important part of the tablet recording creation, only one God is mentioned, and simply as “the God.” The fragments of the tablet “might belong to the purest system of religion.” These are important statements. It would be very interesting if we could determine the date of the remarkable document on which Mr. Smith thus comments. Professor Sayce thinks that the poem on creation (*Chaldean Genesis*) is not probably older than the days of Assur-bani-pal, the grandson of

In the tablet recording creation the only one God is mentioned as “the God.”

¹ Isaiah xlvii. 12.

The date of the poem on Creation.

God's witness to Himself and monotheistic tradition.

Monotheistic belief never extinguished.

The difficulty of supposing that the worship of one God arose out of polytheism and then sank back into it

Sennacherib—which would bring it down to the 7th century B.C.; but he also holds that similar views prevailed at a much earlier date among the Akkadians. The professor speaks of the time when monotheistic ideas “arose.” The question, however, is whether they had not existed from the beginning, at least among the Shemitic portion of the people. We believe that God had “never left Himself without witness,” and that there was, in addition to this, a monotheistic tradition. There, doubtless, was a vacillation, an oscillation, between monotheism and polytheism; but the former belief, though frequently overlaid, was never wholly extinguished. Such is the inference which we feel ourselves compelled to draw from all the available evidence.

The worship of Anu was gradually superseded. His daughter was Istar (Ashtaroth or Astarte), connected with whom there was a far more sensual worship than that of Anu. This in time supplanted the older and purer system.¹ All this is easily understood; but if we hold that the worship of one God arose out of gross polytheism, and then sank back into it, we are landed in inextricable difficulties.

¹ “The worship of Istar became one of the darkest features of Babylonian theology. As this worship increased in favour, it gradually superseded that of Anu, until in time his temple—the house of heaven—came to be regarded as the temple of Venus.”—*G. Smith.*

When the great monotheistic idea is surrendered, deities easily multiply. We need not give a list of Babylonian gods. Merodach seems to have been a national divinity, the protector of Babylon ; and with him was probably identified Bel, whose name is generally supposed to be a variant form of Baal, *i.e.*, *master, owner*.

The multiplication of deities resulting from the surrender of monotheism.

Certain parts of Babylonian worship were excessively impure. There was a law in Babylon that every woman, once in her life, should prostitute herself to any stranger that asked her in the temple of the chief goddess. Even Herodotus denounces the practice as "in the highest degree abominable." It seems to have been from Babylon that the horrible pollution passed over into Greece and Sicily, and various other places.

Impurity of Babylonian worship.

The Assyrian nation was greatly influenced by the Babylonian, which evidently was the older of the two.¹ The people have been well called "the Romans of Asia."² They were a nation of ferocious warriors, in whose nature cruelty seems to have been ingrained. They blinded, impaled, tortured, or flayed alive, their prisoners ; while the Egyptians, we may note, were by no means so merciless. Their character was reflected in their religion. Human sacrifices were frequent.

The character of the Assyrian nation.

Magic, sorcery, and divination were hardly less prevalent in Assyria than in Babylon. The pro-

Magic, etc. in Assyria

¹ As stated in Genesis x. 11.

² By G. Rawlinson.

phet Nahum, in his magnificent description of the siege and capture of Nineveh, the capital, styles it "the mistress of witchcrafts."

3. PHŒNICIAN SYSTEM.

The chief
divinity
of the
Phœnicians.

WE next speak of the Phœnicians, who were early distinguished as an enterprising commercial people. We are still doubtful as to their origin and their relation to the other Canaanite races. Their chief divinity was Baal—also called Moloch, who seems to have been the sun-god. The sun could be viewed as a beneficent being, or as a relentless tyrant flaming with wrath; and generally, or at all events frequently, he was regarded in the latter aspect. Only blood—human blood—could appease the anger of the deity when it was deeply roused. Hence the priests scourged and gashed themselves; and his votaries strove to propitiate him by sacrificing their best and dearest. Milton's celebrated description is not drawn in colours over-dark :

Their
worship.

Moloch, horrid king, bedewed with blood
Of infant sacrifice and parents' tears,
Though, for the noise of drums and cymbals loud,
The children's cries unheard that passed through fire
To his grim idol.

Human
sacrifices.

The firstborn especially were thus sacrificed, and on occasions of great public calamity multitudes of youths of the noblest families were burnt alive. Thus at Carthage, which was colonized from Tyre,

when Agathocles had inflicted a severe defeat on the citizens, at least two hundred children of the noblest birth were sacrificed;¹ and when, in turn, the Carthaginians had gained a victory, their most beautiful captives were in like manner offered up. Our readers will remember the frequent mention of this dreadful rite in the Old Testament. Among

Old
Testament
reference.

Shemitic races, the Hebrews alone were taught to hold it in abhorrence. This terrible hardness of character was accompanied—might we not say caused?²—by another leading characteristic of Phœnician worship—its shameful lasciviousness. It equalled in this respect, if it did not surpass, the Babylonian system. We cannot dwell on the disgusting subject. The old Akkadian religion had been marked by cruelty; but impurity, as an essential part of worship, was foreign to it. This deplorable distinction clung especially to Shemitic races—Israel alone excepted.

The lasciviousness
of
Phœnician
worship.

The characteristics of the three religions we have mentioned—Babylonian, Assyrian, and Phœnician—belonged in a greater or less degree to the cognate

Israel alone
among
Shemitic
races free
from
impurity
in worship.

¹ The language of Diodorus is not quite clear; but, as Grote observes, the number of children offered up was certainly 200, and probably 500. *History of Greece*, VIII., p. 604.

² "Lust hard by hate." So Milton. Or, as Robert Burns has it—

I waive the quantum of the sin,
The hazard of concealing;
But oh! it hardens all within,
And petrifies the feeling.

The moral degradation of the seven nations of Canaan.

The purity of Israelitish religion inexplicable on naturalistic principles.

racess—such as Ammonites, Moabites, etc. The “seven nations of Canaan” are mentioned in the Pentateuch as all alike sunk in the depths of moral corruption; so that the land was ready to “spue them out.” This renders the severely pure morality of the religion of Israel truly remarkable, and, on naturalistic principles, inexplicable. We have no right to suppose that, in original temperament or character, the Hebrews differed radically from their brethren. By what conceivable process, then, of natural evolution could their religion arise?

4. LYDIAN AND PHRYGIAN SYSTEMS.

The chief systems in the interior of Asia Minor.

WE come now to speak of the chief systems that prevailed in the interior of Asia Minor,¹ particularly in Lydia and Phrygia. In describing these, we require to state carefully the dates to which we refer; for, in those regions, the displacement of races and religions was very frequent. Turanians, Shemites, Aryans, all clashed together within the peninsula. The Turanians came first. But from the 12th to the 7th century B.C., the predominant power in Asia Minor was Assyria; and Assyrian (or Babylonian) ideas on religion were, in consequence, widely diffused, extending even to the Ægean Sea. The Persian dominion followed; and Zoroastrian rites to a considerable

Assyrian ideas widely diffused.

¹ Strabo, who knew the region well, speaks especially of Cappadocia as having adopted Persian rites to a large extent.

extent superseded, or rather, blended with the Assyrian, and also with the still more ancient Turanian worship, which had never been wholly extinguished. It probably was from their Turanian descent that the religions of Lydia and Phrygia were especially marked as passionate and orgiastic. Excitement was wrought up to frenzy by the beating of drums, the clashing of cymbals, and the wildest dances. The worshippers, the priests especially, ran howling, cutting themselves with knives. All this was terribly apt to end in unbridled debauchery. Such was the worship of the Great Mother and the god Sabazios. When these rites, along with the closely allied worship of Dionysus (Bacchus), had been introduced into Rome about the year 176 B.C., the Senate was compelled to suppress them by the strong arm of law as being utterly intolerable.

Zoroastrian rites superseded or blended with the Assyrian and also with the older Turanian.

Turanian origin of Lydian and Phrygian orgies.

5. HITTITE SYSTEM.

RECENTLY most important discoveries have been made regarding the Hittites—a race, or union of races, that rose into power in the 16th century B.C., and for centuries contended valiantly with the Egyptians on the one side and the Assyrians on the other. It might have been hoped that their faith would prove, on investigation, to be of a higher type than the systems

Hittite faith not purer than the others.

which have already passed under review. It is not so, however.

“The religion of the Hittites seems to have been appropriated from the worst features of Babylonian, Phenician, and, latterly, Egyptian idolatry.”¹

We must pause in this sorrowful review. As a well-informed writer puts it,—

The philosophy of the religion of Asia Minor summed up.

“The whole philosophy of the religion of Asia Minor is summed up in three words. We find them engraven on a tomb found at Kotiañon, in Phrygia: ‘This is what I say to my friends: *Give yourselves up to pleasure and enjoyment: live. For you must die. Therefore drink, enjoy, dance.*”²

6. GRECIAN SYSTEM.

Our intellectual sympathy with the Greeks.

BUT let us pass on to the fair land of Hellas, and to a people with whom we moderns have far closer intellectual sympathy,—whose thoughts, even when we may not sympathize with them, we can at least understand. The religion of Greece must have been in a large degree derived from Egypt and still more, the East; but the shaping spirit of the highly endowed Greeks entirely changed its original character. It made the deities thoroughly human—gigantic men and women. They had human passions, virtues, vices. They ate and drank, quarrelled and fought, very much as the lively Greeks were accustomed to do among themselves; and these divinities were some-

The religion of Greece derived from Egypt and the East.

The human character of the Greek deities.

¹ So Canon Tristram.

² *Revue des deux Mondes*, Oct. 1873, p. 936.

times so merry—at a friend's expense, it might be—that “inextinguishable laughter” shook the skies. Such, at least, is the system that appears in the Homeric poems. How far it may have been the production of one, or perhaps two minds, we cannot, with assurance, say; the Greek writers generally ascribed its rise to the joint influence of Homer and Hesiod; but one would think it could only by degrees have assumed its peculiar type. The great popularity of Homer imprinted it deeply on the mind of the people. Changes, however, came on; foreign rites pressed in. Before the Persian war a great alteration was visible in many respects. The earlier Greeks had been a stirring, joyous, careless race, not much occupied with religion; but gradually there came to be magnificent temples, priests, solemn ceremonies, mysteries. Wild orgiastic religions also appeared, or, if not new, they were carried to much greater excess than before,—the worship of Dionysus (Bacchus) for example, of the Thracian goddess Cotytto, and the Syrian god Adonis (Tammuz, as in Ezek. viii. 14).

The system ascribed to the joint influence of Homer and Hesiod.

The character of the earlier Greeks.

Gradual rise of temples, etc.

Orgiastic religions.

In the theology of Homer, as a careful student¹ of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* has admitted, “elements of a profound corruption abound.” Later systems were still worse. But philosophy arose. Grave, thoughtful men were shocked at the popular conceptions of deity, and began to denounce them.

Corrupt elements in the theology of Homer.

¹ Mr. Gladstone.

The idea of the divine purged in the hands of the sages.

The debasement of the religion of the common people. Its consequences.

The retrospect profoundly painful.

In the hands of a succession of sages the abstract idea of the divine was more and more purged of base alloy ; but, in proportion as it became refined, the notion grew dimmer ; until, in the case of Aristotle, deity was a power, or a principle, rather than a person. Even Plato never inquired about the personality of God ; he seems rather to think of a diffused soul of the world.¹ But philosophic speculation was not for the common people. Their religion became lower and lower. Offences against God and human nature ere long flourished in rank luxuriance. As both cause and effect of all this, a light scoffing infidelity extended among all the educated. Then patriotism and public spirit died. All that was magnanimous in Greek character faded away ; the “ hungry Greekling ” (*Græculus esuriens*) was ready to say, or do, anything for a bit of bread. Art itself became debased. Even the population began to die out ; in various places, in order to prevent fertile regions from being changed into deserts, Roman colonists were brought in ; and “ shocking immorality was the cancer that ate into the life of Greece.”²

The retrospect we have been engaged in is profoundly painful. “ Immortal Greece—dear land of glorious lays,” exclaims Keble, speaking of the classic poetry with all a poet’s passion. Yet notwithstanding her subtle intellect, and vivid imagination

¹ So Zeller.

² So Thirlwall.

and perfect taste, she sank into an abyss thus fathomless of shame and ruin. Why? Even Byron saw the reason :

The abyss of shame and ruin.

“ Enough, no foreign foe could quell
Thy soul, till from itself it fell,
And self-abasement paved the way
To villain bonds and despot sway.”

It is through the beautiful we reach the good, said Schiller. Say rather, through the good the beautiful. At all events, when the love of the good has passed away, the perception of the beautiful perishes soon after. This is one of the lessons which is inscribed on the history of Hellas, as if “graven with an iron pen and lead,” and so inscribed “in the rock for ever.”

The lesson of the history of Hellas.

7. ROMAN SYSTEM.

WE come now to Rome. The Romans were originally in many things different from the Greeks. Less speculative ; more practical ; simpler, truer, graver ; more law-abiding ; with a better family life ; and possessed of a deeper religious instinct. The early religion of Rome had considerable resemblance to that of Greece, both having sprung out of one Aryan faith ; but, for some time, the two systems tended to diverge, each being influenced by its own environment. It is interesting to note that the Roman religion had

The character of the Romans.

The resemblance of the early religion of Rome to that of Greece.

Points of
correspon-
dence with
the old
Persian.

special points of correspondence with the old Persian, as unfolded in the Zend-avesta.¹ Much more importance was attached to rites than to beliefs or emotions—the worship tending to a punctilious externalism; prayer became a kind of magical formula; much stress was laid on ceremonial purity; the mythology was meagre. A new departure took place towards the end of the regal period. Images were now introduced; and temples, increasing in splendour, began to appear.

The religion
becomes
more
and more
political.

The religion became more and more political, and was regulated by the State. But cold formalism could not satisfy the popular mind and heart.

Greek and
Asiatic gods
press in.

First, Greek and then Asiatic gods and goddesses pressed in. Infidelity succeeded, at least among the higher classes. The poet Ennius, a Calabrian Greek, was among the first to propagate it. During the two centuries that preceded the birth of Christ, unbelief spread like a pestilence, and immorality kept pace with it. Each was both cause and effect of the other. In vain did the elder Cato strive to keep out the infection; in vain did he inveigh against the Greeks as the “parents of every vice;” corruption rushed on, as Augustine says, “like a headlong torrent.” Family life greatly changed; divorce became fashionable; and women—in many cases, women of the highest rank—became shame-

The spread
of unbelief
and
immorality.

¹ So the Zend and Latin languages have special points in common.

less in their degradation. Even noted historical personages, with whose names we do not readily associate the idea of vice, were men of abandoned life. Thus Dr. Arnold speaks with severe reprobation of "the utter moral degradation" of Julius Cæsar. A deep darkness, almost amounting to despair, seemed settling down on the minds of men. Suicide prevailed, in consequence, to an unparalleled extent.

Dr. Arnold
on Julius
Cæsar.

But the *nemesis* of infidelity is superstition. The old Italic religion had been comparatively pure. Thus in the very name of the chief god, *Jupiter Optimus Maximus*, we find the ideas of supreme goodness and supreme power.¹ But when these had perished, something was felt to be needful in their place; and dark, gloomy faiths—hideous brutal mysteries—from Egypt, Asia Minor, and Babylon—flowed in to fill the intolerable void. In Greece itself, as religion declined, magic and sorcery, its miserable substitutes, had greatly flourished. So in Rome. Conjurors, soothsayers, astrologers, and fortune-tellers filled every street, and insinuated themselves into every household. "Professed atheists trembled in secret at the mysterious power of magical incantations;" many invoked the shades of the dead, or strove to penetrate into the

The
nemesis of
infidelity.

The
influx of
superstition.

Fears of
professed
atheists.

¹ So Cicero: Te, Capitoline, quem propter beneficia populus Romanus optimum, propter vim maximum, nominavit.—*Pro domo sua*, c. 57.

secrets of futurity by examining the entrails of a murdered child.¹

Matthew Arnold's sketch of the mental condition of the higher classes in Rome.

Mr. Matthew Arnold, with a few strokes, has given us a vivid sketch of the mental condition of the higher classes in Rome :

On that hard Pagan world disgust And secret loathing fell,
And weariness and sated lust Made human life a hell.
In his cool hall, with haggard eyes, The noble Roman lay,—
He drove abroad in furious guise Along the Appian Way ;
He made a feast, drank fierce and fast, And crowned his hair
with flowers—
No easier and no quicker passed The impracticable hours.

Renan's testimony.

M. Renan's testimony is the same. He states that, under the empire, Rome became a very hell (*un vrai enfer*).

Greek and Roman philosophy.

It may, perhaps, be thought that in the preceding estimate we have overlooked the value of Greek and Roman philosophy. On that head, then, we still add a few words.

Stoicism.

Morally, the best philosophical system was Stoicism. We have spoken above of the value of this philosophy in the development of jurisprudence. The later Stoicism certainly enunciated various important principles in ethics. Thus the cosmopolitan idea—the conception of man as man—was not foreign to it. It admitted that slaves were not mere things, but possessed of rights. Stoicism did not readily lose itself in speculation ; it clung firmly to the idea of duty, and was intensely pro-

The conception of man as man not foreign to it.

¹ Merivale's *History of Rome*, vol. II. p. 514.

tical. Seneca expresses sentiments which have so much of a Christian ring that many have held that he must have derived them from intercourse with St. Paul ; though that is scarcely probable.

The Christian ring of Seneca's sentiments.

We must cherish for such men as Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius that kind of wondering regard with which we think of Buddha. Seneca, however, was a mere rhetorician ; his fine periods were flatly contradicted by his life.

Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius.

But Stoicism cherished an immeasurable pride ; and it wrapped itself in an icy, self-worshipping selfishness. Its theology was pantheistic,¹ really, if not confessedly. It held that all things were ruled by the iron necessity of fate. On the whole, the most favourable estimate that can possibly be formed of this haughty philosophy is that of Reuss :

The pride of Stoicism.

“ The fine ideas of Roman Stoicism were buds which only the sun of the Gospel could develop into beauty and perfection ; but which, if left alone, would never have produced rich fruits.”

Reuss's estimate of Stoicism.

We have thus failed to trace in the great Pagan systems of antiquity any grand conceptions which Christianity did or could incorporate with itself. At the same time, there were in most, or all, of them what have been called “ unconscious prophecies ”² of better things. Prophecies, or even anticipations, in any strict sense of the word, these assuredly were not ; but they were questionings,

“ Unconscious prophecies ” of better things in Paganism.

¹ So Zeller.

² By Archbishop Trench especially.

A conscious
emptiness
of the
heart.

yearnings, aspirations—a feeling that the heart was empty, and the desire, sometimes the hope, that it might yet be filled. And HE who sees the end from the beginning, was all the while preparing to answer those questions, satisfy those cravings, and fulfil, yea exceed, the highest anticipations ever formed by

The prophetic soul
Of the wide world, dreaming on things to come.

The
coming of
Christ.

Christ came, says St. Paul, “in the fulness of the time.” For His coming, it is easy to see that a manifold preparation had been made, extending throughout the ages. With a view to this grand consummation, the kingdoms of the world had risen and fallen. All things had been “shaken,”¹ in order that the false and the fleeting might be shaken off, and that the true and the eternal might have room to grow and unfold their holy beauty.

The age—
long pre-
paration
for it.

It was indeed “the fulness of the time,” in the largest sense of these significant words; but we must here limit our view to religion, and one aspect of the “fulness.”

Com-
mingling
of creeds
consequent
on the
conquests
of Alex-
ander and
extension
of Roman
dominion.

We have seen the deplorable condition into which each of the great religions of Paganism had fallen. The conquests of Alexander the Great, and the extension of Roman dominion, had led largely to a commingling of creeds. Traces of Oriental systems could be found even in Britain.

¹ Haggai ii. 6, 7.

But the union of eastern and western thought had produced no happy results. Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Phenicia, Lydia, Phrygia, Greece, Rome—these and other nations had toiled, as we may express it, to scale the heavens and there find God; but every attempt had ended in vanity and vexation of spirit. We can hardly feel surprise that the difficulty of ascertaining truth and the endless conflict of opinion led many thoughtful men to discard the consideration of religion altogether. Why should they pursue a shadow that ever eluded their grasp? What Justin Martyr says of the philosophers of his time—the commencement of the second century—applies with equal force to the century preceding :

“Most of the philosophers never consider the question whether there be one God or many; whether there be a Divine Providence or not.”

Thus, growing scepticism among the educated, and grosser and grosser superstition among the common people, were the melancholy characteristics of the age which ushered in the Christian era.

But God had not forsaken the world. He had, as St. Paul expresses it, “suffered all nations to walk in their own ways,”¹ though, at the same time, He had “never left Himself without witness.” The history of the race bears, in several respects, a resemblance to that of an individual. Man is very

No happy results from the union of eastern and western thought.

The difficulty of ascertaining truth led many to discard the consideration altogether.

Justin Martyr on the philosophers of his time.

The world not forsaken by God.

¹ Acts xiv. 16.

The failures
in the
attempt to
find out
God.

The need of
a divine
revelation
demonstra-
ted.

proud; he will not seek the help of God until he feels himself helpless. To the question of the patriarch, "Canst thou by searching find out God?" he would boldly have answered, Yes, until he had repeatedly failed in the proud attempt. More than three thousand years had passed since, in Chaldea and Egypt, he had first essayed the great problem; and the demonstration of the necessity of a divine revelation had been overwhelmingly ample. At least some of the higher minds had seen it; and Plato sighed for a *theios logos*. Or, if man did not fully see it, yet the yearning heart of heaven could wait no longer. And, therefore, as the apostle plainly puts it,

"After that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness [*i.e.*, what man called foolishness] of the preaching to save them that believe."¹

The
advent
of the Light
of the
world.

In the moral world, as in the physical, the dawn precedes the sunrise. The Sun of Righteousness came not unheralded. The first streaks of day had appeared long ago, and the reddening of the eastern sky announced the speedy advent of the "Light of the world."

¹ Archdeacon Farrar has repeatedly used the phrase,—"ethnic inspiration." We think the expression unhappy, and fear it will be misunderstood and misapplied. But the Archdeacon has lately said that Heathenism was "a vast failure," and "the light of any other religion compared with that of Christianity, but as a star to the sun."

8. THE FAITH OF ISRAEL.

FOR two thousand years, and possibly more, one race had stood apart from all others, "dwelling alone, and not reckoned among the nations." It is in the divine training of this people—and not where many vainly seek it—that we are to look for the true evolution, or development, of religion.

The true evolution of religion to be found in the training of Israel.

There are men who question the accuracy of our conceptions regarding Abraham. But even the destructive criticism, in the last resort, postulates an Abraham, or some equivalent starting-point; otherwise, Moses becomes an inexplicable phenomenon. The grandeur of the position occupied by the latter is, of course, undeniable. Kuenen has said:

Moses inexplicable without Abraham.

The grandeur of Abraham's position.

"Even from the time of Moses, Yahveh (Jehovah) comes forward with moral commandments. This is the starting point of Israel's rich religious development; the germ of those glorious truths which were to ripen in the course of centuries."

Kuenen on the commandments.

It is not too great a stress which is thus laid on the ethical character of the Mosaic faith. The Ten Commandments arose in serene imperishable majesty at least fifteen centuries before Christ. There is no parallel fact in the history of Pagan systems. "Be ye holy, for I am holy" was the sublime oracle of Israel's God, and of Israel's God alone.

No fact in the history of Pagan systems parallel to the rise of the ten commandments.

Yahveh
not a mere
tribal God.

Many critics assert that Yahveh was at first viewed as only a tribal god, who protected Israel, while rival deities protected other nations. That belief is based on the pure assumption that the history of Abraham, as given in Genesis, is of comparatively late origin; for the Lord is there spoken of as "Almighty," as "Judge of all the earth," and so on. But waiving the case of Abraham, and supposing we could admit that the people in Egypt, enslaved and in every way demoralized, rose no higher than to conceive of Yahveh as only *their* god; yet He was, at all events, recognized as a power above all powers—a personality—a Creator—ruling nature, never identified with it—awfully pure, yet infinitely compassionate—forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, yet punishing the impenitently wicked—a Being that abhorred all the cruel and abominable rites in which the Pagan gods were believed to delight—whose power and presence freed His people from all the superstitious terrors and the miserable magic which formed so large a part of the worship of surrounding nations. Even if the so-called higher criticism could prove that some of the conceptions now referred to were possibly inserted in the Pentateuch at a comparatively recent date, yet no one can deny that, at all events, by the eighth century before Christ, there are declarations regarding Jehovah and His

Recognized
as a power
above all
powers.
pure yet
com-
passionate.

His people
freed from
superstitious
terrors by
His power
and
presence.

worship which, in truth and sublimity, have never since been surpassed. Take that passage, for example, in the prophet Micah which has extorted the admiration of Professor Huxley :

Sublime declaration concerning Jehovah and His worship in the eighth century before Christ.

“Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”

Not less remarkable than these lofty utterances is the declaration that Jehovah hated evil in His own people even more than in less favoured nations :

His hatred of evil in His own people.

“You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for your iniquities.”

The gods of the nations were thorough partizans; they sided with their worshippers through right and wrong. Jehovah loved His people much, but righteousness still more. Admirable is the passionate denunciation of the hypocrisy which would divorce two things that ought ever to be linked in indissoluble wedlock—religion and morality :

His love of righteousness.

“Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances and the bag of deceitful weights, and the scant measure that is abominable?”

The vehemence and measureless scorn with which polytheism and idolatry are denounced are also most striking. In all other nations the deities

Denunciation of polytheism and idolatry.

multiplied ; and image-worship rooted itself more and more deeply as time went on.

The hopefulness of the Hebrew Scriptures.

We must pause in our enumeration of the characteristics of the Hebrew Scriptures. Yet one other must still be noted—their hopefulness. When the great monarchies which walled Israel in—especially Egypt and Assyria—were trampling down the liberties of nations and spreading around them their abominable idolatries, and when, to all appearance, the cause both of God and of man was lost, the noble seers of Israel never despaired, never once desponded, in regard to the future of Israel or of the world. All things they knew were in the hands of One who was Almighty, All-wise, and All-gracious. “Be still, and know that I am God,” that is, be calmly confident, and trust in Me: such was the command. One unchanging purpose—a purpose of mercy—ran throughout the ages. Let them in patience possess their souls: for in “the day of the Lord”—“the latter day”—every crooked thing was to be made straight; the Lord alone should be exalted; all iniquity was to stop her mouth; the meek should inherit the earth, and delight themselves in the abundance of peace. More and more the hopes of the nation were made to centre on an individual—“the Coming One”—“the Messiah”—“the Prince of peace;” and in Him all the families of the earth were to be blessed; He would be a light to lighten the

The Hebrew seers never desponded in regard to the future of Israel and the world.

The hopes of the nation made to centre in an individual.

Gentiles, as well as the glory of the people of Israel.

And while prophet after prophet was raised up, all moved by one Spirit, but each unfolding the message of instruction, admonition, or encouragement, or applying it to the special circumstances of his time,—and while the whole ceremonial worship was one vast prophecy of good things to come, and recognized by thoughtful men as such¹—the providence of God was marvellously training the nation for its lofty function. Events that appeared simply evil were overruled to work out good. The captivity in Egypt—the sojourn in the wilderness—the division of the nation into two halves—the captivity in Babylon—the persecutions under Syrian kings—and the conquest of Judæa by the Romans—it is not difficult to see how each of these events was fitted to raise the mind of the people to truer conceptions of God, and teach them deeper lessons of righteousness, of sin, and of salvation.

The providential training of Israel for its lofty function.

The successive events in the history of the people fitted to elevate their conceptions of God.

Meanwhile, the wide diffusion of the Greek language, the translation into it of the Old Testament, and the contact of Greek and Jewish thought—especially in such centres as Alexandria—were very important preparations for the proclamation and reception of the Gospel over the civilized world.

The diffusion of the Greek language an important preparation.

¹ See Kurtz on the sacrificial worship of the Old Testament for proof of this.

III.

THUS, then, at the pre-appointed time—in “the fulness of the time”—dawned “the Light of Life” on men. And now—as Virgil sang, in expectation of some glorious change that was hastening on—

Virgil's
expectation.

“Magnus ab integro sæclorum nascitur ordo ;”¹

or in the words of Augustine :

Augustine.

“Christ appeared to the men of a worn-out dying world, that when every thing around was sinking into decay, they might, through Him, receive a new and youthful life ;”

or in the far sublimer language of St. John :

St. John.

“The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us ; and we beheld His glory—the glory as of the only begotten of the Father ; full of grace and truth : and as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the children of God.”

The
teaching
of Christ.

He taught. He taught those truths to which—though often feebly and fitfully—the human reason and conscience have borne witness throughout the ages. He gave the metal without alloy : His words were pure, as “silver purified seven times.” Then, the majestic verities enunciated by the prophets of Israel He explained, applied, and also developed and enlarged. He taught by words ; He taught by deeds. His entire life was one continuous revelation of God and truth.

He wrought

With human hands the creed of creeds,—

In loveliness of perfect deeds

More strong than all poetic thought.

¹ Now commenceth anew the mighty roll of the ages.

He died. The good Shepherd gave His life for the sheep. That death, that Cross, that love victorious over agony, is the divinest manifestation of the Divinity. It is the full expression of the mind and heart of God ; so that, when once it has taken place, HE who longs adequately to reveal Himself to His creatures, and whom to know is life eternal, can enter into ineffable repose and say, "It is enough: My creatures can know Me now."

The death of Christ.

And Christ rose again—rose to the immediate presence of God. There He is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, "to give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel," and to all.

The resurrection of Christ.

Such very briefly were the truths which His disciples were commanded to proclaim to all nations, "beginning at Jerusalem." But it is one thing to know the truth, and another thing to obey it. We are all familiar with the sorrowful confession of the poet Ovid :

The commission of the disciples

Video meliora proboque,
Deteriora sequor.¹

Moral truths were not unfrequently inculcated by heathen sages. But these sages felt and deplored the exceeding difficulty of inducing others to follow their precepts. They regarded the mass of men as hopelessly sunk in ignorance and vice, and only a small number as so happily constituted that they would ever seek to rise to the serene heights of

The difficulty of the sages

Their view of the mass of mankind.

¹ I see the right, and I approve it too.

Condemn the wrong, and yet the wrong pursue.

The effect of the proclamation of the Gospel.

wisdom and virtue. But lo! a marvel. For when once the silver trump of the "glad tidings" sounded abroad, the lowest depths of society were stirred; and the grandest conceptions which the human mind can form regarding God, and the soul, and holiness, and sin, and reconciliation, and love, and heaven, and hell, now filled the minds, and moved the hearts, and shaped the lives of multitudes, who, until now, had been dead to everything but grovelling ideas and debasing lusts. A stupendous spiritual revolution; in suddenness and completeness wholly without a parallel. An entire transformation in the individual believer, and through individuals a gradual transformation of society.¹

A stupendous and unparalleled spiritual revolution.

It was a conflict of centuries before the great systems which we have been considering gave way before the victorious march of Christianity. But successively and completely all of them did give way. All those vast forms of Pagan faith have melted away like snow in the sunbeam. Or rather say, the great thirst which the Gentile nations sought to quench by drinking of muddy and polluted streams, could now be slaked at the river, "clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb."

The disappearance of the forms of Pagan faith.

The brutish gods of Egypt have perished. We have visited the Serapeum—that vast subterranean

The gods of Egypt

¹ *Nos ergo soli innocentes*, We alone are innocent,—was Tertullian's bold, but unanswered, challenge.—*Apol.* 45

receptacle of dead gods—and found it filled with immense granite sarcophagi, each containing the embalmed form of an ox-god, Apis.¹ Was the resurrection expected? No resurrection *for them* is possible. Baal no longer exalts himself as the rival of Jehovah. Chemosh, “the abomination of the Moabites,” and bloody Moloch, are alike forgotten. In Babylon, Bel has “bowed down” and Nebo has “stooped,” never to rise again; and Dagon of the Philistines has fallen once more,—and now not even the stump of him is left.

No
re-urrection
possible
for them.

Even so have passed away the deities of Greece and Rome. The Parthenon still crowns the Acropolis of Athens; but Pallas Athene, the guardian goddess, has fled; her very name is scarcely remembered there. On snowy Olympus “black-clouding Zeus” no longer holds his throne; and the god of the silver bow, Phœbus Apollo, is discarded alike at Delos and at Delphi. A Christian church stands on the spot where once arose the majestic temple of Jupiter, the guardian of the Capitol. Meantime the Roman empire has been broken in pieces; but the religion of Christ, surviving that convulsion, has converted and tamed the wild barbarians who overwhelmed the ancient world, and has given birth to a form of civilization with the continuance of which are inseparably linked the dearest hopes of humanity.

The deities
of Greece.

The break
up of the
Roman
Empire.

What the
religion of
Christ has
done.

¹ There seem to be sixty-four of these sarcophagi

The secret
of this
power.

And whence this unexampled power? That problem exercises and perplexes the minds of many at this day. It was the fuller, deeper truth He taught, say some. It was His character—matchless in purity and love, say others. Yes; but there was more, much more; and we have no reason to believe, if as Mr. Matthew Arnold says, the Syrian stars look down upon a grave from which He never rose, that Christianity could have long survived His crucifixion.¹ Not the so-called omnipotence of Truth, but the omnipotence of Him who is the Truth, has won the victory. As said the Apostle:

The omni-
potence of
Christ.

“Being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, HE hath shed forth this which ye now hear and see.”

The truth
taught by
Christ
viewed by
Him as
salt.

Christ Himself spoke of the truth He taught as at once light and salt. View it for a moment under the latter aspect. Mere worldly gifts and

¹ It would be easy to adduce from many writers far removed from orthodox Christianity, strong language regarding the unequalled elevation and purity of Christ's character. Our limits restrict us to one or two quotations. Spinoza says: “The eternal wisdom has manifested itself in all things, but chiefly in the human mind, and most of all in Jesus Christ.” (*Æterna sapientia sese in omnibus rebus, maximè in humana mente, omnium maximè in Christo Jesu manifestavit. Epist. xxi.*) Goethe said, “I bow before Jesus Christ as a revelation of supreme morality.” Still stronger is the testimony of John Stuart Mill. Mr. John Morley indeed finds fault with Mr. Mill for his admiration, and uses depreciatory language, but without any attempt to support the charges made. Is this consistent with Mr. Morley's ideas of delicacy and justice?

graces tend lamentably to become corrupt, and to perish in their corruption. Without religion, without the religion of Christ, the human race could never raise, and never maintain, the noble fabric of a true manhood and an enduring civilization. Certainly there was much in the culture of ancient Greece that was intellectual and refined; much that was stately and seemed strong in that of ancient Rome; but the preserving element, the salt, was wanting; and either form of civilization ere long became morally corrupt, and sank in ruins. But now—whatever elements of truth or beauty—whatever pure forms of life appear in any land or age, Christianity despises them not, nay, she thankfully accepts them. She blends them with her own diviner life, so warding off corruption, and rendering these otherwise perishable treasures, “an everlasting possession.” Forms of social life which ancient sages sometimes dreamt of, but despaired of realizing in a world like this, have been successfully wrought out and maintained by the Gospel; for its legitimate offspring ever is that godliness which is “profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.”

The religion of Christ essential to the elevation of the human race.

Christianity accepts and assimilates all elements of truth and beauty.

The profitability of godliness.

We read, a short time ago, in a paper written by a well-known leader among the Comtists—Mr. Frederic Harrison—that “Christianity does not

Mr. Fred. Harrison's assertion about Christianity.

Christianity touches human life at every point.

even claim to be co-extensive with human life." Either Mr. Harrison or we must have entirely misread the New Testament. To our apprehension it claims to touch human life at every point—to mould and magisterially direct every thing in individual, domestic, and public life. For it lays down principles which penetrate man all through, building up the individual anew from the very foundation of his being, and, through the individual, as we have said, reforming and regulating society. Accepted, it regenerates the man; and, so far as accepted, it regenerates the world. It reconciles man with man by reconciling man with God.

The question of the stability of our own civilization.

In the preceding pages we have sought to state and illustrate facts—avoiding, as far as possible, mere speculation. Yet one question unavoidably suggests itself, after this long review of fallen civilizations and extinct systems of belief. What of our own civilization? is it secure? We answer, Yes, if our Christianity is secure. "Civilization in our day," said Victor Cousin, "means Christianity." If we draw inferences from the past, we must hold that were materialism, agnosticism, or even mere deism to prevail to any considerable extent, the consequences would be most serious. Morality would gradually give way. Then the *nemesis* of which we spoke above¹ would soon step in. In vain would an infidelity, calling itself

Victor Cousin on civilization.

The consequences of the prevalence of different forms of unbelief.

¹ See page 41.

scientific or philosophic, rear its proud head and try to suppress all faith ;—bastard forms of belief, and low, superstitious practices would force themselves in, and infect, ere long, the *savants* themselves. *Les incredules les plus credules*,¹ said Pascal. Even already we witness, to our astonishment, the spread, to some extent, in Europe and America, of theosophy, “esoteric Buddhism,” and various kindred follies—precisely as, of old, Plotinus and Porphyry had a legitimate successor in Iamblichus, and soaring philosophy was debased into magic and theurgy.

Esoteric
Buddhism
in Europe
and
America.

These things are, no doubt, humbling. Yet we do not bate a jot of heart or hope. Christianity cannot perish. Even now, while we mourn over the falling away of some, one plainly sees that, taking the human race as a whole, Christianity is steadily extending and deepening. Trial may be in store,—the forces of belief and unbelief may be ranging themselves for a final struggle ; but, ere long, to Him, who now rules in the midst of His enemies, “every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess.” Does there seem a tone of pride—while rebuking pride—in these words of ours? If so, we desire to put the feeling from us—remembering the words of the blessed Master : “I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself.”²

Christianity
spreading
and
deepening.

Its ultimate
triumph

¹ Unbelievers are the most credulous of all.

² ἐμαυτόν.

The
attraction
of the
cross.

He was first lifted up on the cross, before He was lifted up to His throne in heaven; and it is now only by the manifestation of His cross and its deep meanings that hard hearts are melted and drawn to Him with irresistible attraction; and doubtless the bright consummation of a regenerated and rejoicing world would be sooner reached, if only we, His followers, had more of the Master's spirit—ever seeking in meekness and love like His

With winning words to conquer willing hearts
And make persuasion do the work of fear.

Christ and
His people.

The
function of
the Church
to shine.

He who said of Himself, "I am the Light of the world," said also of His people, "Ye are the light of the world." He is the Sun. His Church is the Moon; which, in His absence, is commanded to shine, full-orbed and cloudless, on the world.

Oh, Church of the Living God! "arise, shine, for thy light is come; and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

APPENDIX.

ON ~~THE~~ RELIGIONS OF UNCIVILIZED ANCIENT NATIONS.—
We have already intimated that little notice need be taken of these. Nearly everything we know about them is fitted to excite disgust and horror.

1. DRUIDISM was the faith of the Celtic (including the Cymric) races. We have notices of it in seven or eight classical writers—particularly Cæsar, Tacitus, and Pliny. A few hints may be gathered from old Gaelic and Welsh poems—such as those of Ossian and Taliessin ; but their historical value is questionable.

Notices of
Druidism
in classical
writers, etc

The Druids, the religious leaders of the people, were of three classes. The lowest consisted of the bards ; the second of those who watched natural phenomena ; the highest were more properly priests. An arch-druid presided over all ; who apparently wielded unbounded power.

Three
classes of
Druids.

There were also three classes of Druidesses. The highest formed a kind of Vestal virgins ; who lived in sisterhoods and never married. These predicted coming events, cured diseases, raised storms or calmed them, and transformed themselves into whatever shape they pleased. In fact, the lingering superstitions about *witches* in Western Europe are traceable back to Druidic times.

Three
classes of
Druidesses.

With regard to the deities the Roman poet Lucan speaks thus :

Here Hesus' horrid altar stands,
Here dire Teutates human blood demands ;
Here Taranis by wretches is obeyed,
And vies in slaughter with the Scythian maid.¹

The oak tree, the acorn, and especially the mistletoe—a small plant that grows on the oak—were especially sacred. Worship was performed in dark groves.² Human sacrifices were frequent. Cæsar informs us that they made enormous figures of wicker work, and filled them with human beings, whom they burnt to death.

Sacred tree.

Human
sacrifices.

¹ Rowe's Lucan, Book i.

² Lucan, Pharsalia, Book iii., gives a striking description of a gloomy grove near Marseilles.

Even the priestesses performed such dreadful services. Strabo speaks thus of these among the Cimbri: "The women who follow the Cimbri to war are accompanied by grey-haired prophetesses. They go with drawn swords through the camp, strike down the prisoners they meet, and drag them to a brazen caldron. There is an erection above this, on which the priestess cuts the throat of the victim, and watches how the blood flows into the vessel. Others tear open the bodies of the captives and judge from the quivering entrails as to future events."

Excommunication and its penalty.

Excommunication by the Druids was a tremendous infliction. It must have involved death or unconditional submission to the priests."

Ancient German religion morally no higher than the Celts.

2. THE RELIGION OF THE ANCIENT GERMANS.—Cæsar and Tacitus supply us with interesting information regarding this system; and the Edda of Scandinavia tells us much regarding its character at a later date. It was morally no higher than that of the Celts.

Nature-worship its foundation.

Nature-worship was its main foundation. Sun, Moon, Fire, Earth, were greatly worshipped. Woden (in the Edda, Odin) was the chief deity; he was the god of war. Thunor (Thor) was the god of thunder. He wielded, and made much use of a tremendous hammer. Lok, or Loki, was an evil being, at war with the gods; but at present a tortured prisoner. Walhalla was heaven. It was a place where the blessed warriors every day hacked each other to pieces, then got cured, and wound up the day by drinking mead—an intoxicating beverage—out of the skulls of slaughtered enemies.

Human sacrifices—especially of captives—were frequent. A King of Sweden is said to have sacrificed nine of his sons in succession, in order to prolong his own life. A kind of wild-beast ferocity marked the people: the celebrated death-song of Ragnar Lodbrok "breathes slaughter" throughout. All hopefulness seems banished from this faith. Balder, the brightest of the gods, is slain; and we are approaching the dreadful time

When Lok shall burst his sevenfold chain,
And night resume her ancient reign.

No account of the Slavonian faith in an old form.

3. THE RELIGION OF THE ANCIENT SLAVONIANS.—We have no satisfactory account of this faith in a very old form. The last stronghold of it was the island of Rugen, in the Baltic.

This was destroyed in 1168 by Waldemar, King of Denmark. Saxo Grammaticus, a contemporary of Waldemar's, gives a long account of the chief idol there worshipped. He describes it as a gigantic figure, with four heads and four necks—two breasts and two backs. Cattle were sacrificed to it. In sweeping the temple, the priest did not dare to breathe; and for every necessary inspiration he had to quit the temple. At the religious festivals intemperance was deemed a merit. The idol had a horse, of whose tail or mane to pull a single hair was sacrilege. It bore the god whenever he fought against his enemies, and was often found in the morning covered with sweat and mud in consequence. A standard consecrated to the god entitled those who bore it to pillage even the temples, and to commit any kind of outrage. Such is the testimony of Saxo Grammaticus.

The account
of Saxo
Grammaticus.

The religion of the Slavonians was evidently very childish; but it was not so ferocious as that of the Celts or the Germans.

Slavonian
religion
childish.



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